



CLARENTINE.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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CLARENTE.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

IN the county of Devon, distant four miles from the nearest town, and surrounded only by woods, and a few thinly-scattered cottages, stood the ancient family mansion of Sir James Delmington, Bart. lately deceased. This habitation, at once gloomy, stately, and extensive, was now the constant residence of Lady Delmington, his widow, her children, an orphan niece, and a considerable establishment of domestics.

Married extremely young, Lady Delmington, though the mother of a large family, was still in the prime of life, handsome, and accomplished. Her birth,

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though not noble, was respectable; her education had been attended to with care; her disposition was benevolent and amiable; and her manners polished, easy, and unaffected.

As her income, since the death of Sir James, had been considerably diminished; and, with a view to the future advantage of her younger children, she wished to avoid every unnecessary expence, she had from the moment that event took place determined upon residing wholly at Delmington House. There, educating her girls entirely at home, upon the most economical, yet rational plan, she lived retired, and almost unknown; contentedly devoting herself to the duties of her situation, and unrepiningly dedicating the best part of her life to solitude, tender maternal cares, vigilant attention, and incessant anxiety.

Her eldest son, Edgar, who inherited his father's title, and his father's excellence of heart and disposition, was at this period about fifteen. To a countenance open, intelligent, and animated, he united a frankness, a generosity of character, and a sweetness of temper, rarely to be surpassed.

passed. Though wild, thoughtless, and impetuous, he was never unfeeling, never malevolent or deliberately resentful.— His passions were violent, but by a little management easily curbed; and by a mild remonstrance and supplicating look entirely subdued.

Frederick, the second son, was a year younger, and in every sense of the word merited the appellation of a compleat *pickle*;—careless, inattentive, utterly devoid of serious application, all he learnt, he learnt by chance, and the help of quick parts, and a retentive memory: In person he was light and active; in understanding penetrating and acute; to a blunt readiness at *repartee*, that sometimes resembled wit, he added an imagination more than commonly fertile in devising schemes of mischief; and a boldness seldom equalled in putting them in execution.

Hitherto educated at home, by a neighbouring clergyman, Mr. Aukland, under the eye of their mother, the time was now arrived when they were first to emerge into the world, and quit the sheltering roof that had so long been the

boundary of all their thoughts—the scene of all their youthful happiness. At the period when this history commences they were upon the point of setting out for Eton, whence, accompanied by Mr. Auckland, they were afterwards to proceed to one of the universities.

On the morning of a beautiful autumnal day, they met by five o'clock in the great breakfast parlour, to wait the arrival of the chaise that was to convey them away. Their mother, dreading by her own to heighten their depression, purposely forbore joining them, though already awake, and listening with fond solicitude to every sound that ascended from below. Their sisters, however, either less deeply affected, or less aware of their own weakness, presently ran down to them, followed by their little cousin, once more to repeat the “farewells” of the preceding night, and to see them depart.

With heavy hearts they now heard the chaise approach. Mr. Auckland, whom it had stopped and called for in its way from Lynton, the market town at which it had been hired, refused to alight; the two boys, therefore, forcing an air of gaiety
their

their hearts were far from feeling, hastily embraced their sisters—looked up with glistening eyes towards their mother's window, and then running down the steps, sprung into the chaise, and in a few moments were out of sight.

The girls, arm in arm, the tears streaming down their cheeks, stood at the threshold of the door, watching the rapid progress of the carriage as it drove down the avenue, till it was not only beyond their view, but even beyond their hearing. Melancholy and silent, they then turned back, sighing to think how many months must elapse before those dear brothers could be restored to their wishes.

Some hours had passed since their departure, and Lady Delmington, with all the tranquillity she could assume, was sitting after dinner at work in her dressing-room, when a servant entered to announce the approach of visitors.

Detached from the world as she had long been, and unused to the sight of evening company, this was no very welcome information at a time like the present. It was impossible, however, to be denied—the carriage that was arriving had nearly reached the house, and the children

were in sight upon the lawn before it. She gave orders, therefore, to the man to say she was at home, and to come back and inform her who the visitors were before she went down.

Accordingly, in a few minutes he returned to say Mr Somerset was below.

“ Mr Somerset ? ” repeated Lady Delmington, “ then call Clarentine, and send her into the parlour to me.

So saying, she hastened down ; but on opening the room door, shrunk back a moment from an involuntary emotion of surprise, so little did the person she there beheld resemble him she expected to find. Instead of a man near sixty, feeble and infirm, she saw a young naval officer not more than twenty, whose figure was all elegance, whose countenance was noble and spirited, and whose first address, at once respectful and manly, prepossessed her strongly in his favour.

“ I have done myself the honour of waiting upon your Ladyship,” said he, “ at the desire of my father, to enquire after the young relation you are so good as to countenance, and to assure her of the pleasure it will give him to hear she is well and happy.”

“ I thank

“ I thank you, Sir, in her name,” answered Lady Delmington, “ for the kindness of this visit, and hope in a few minutes to present her to you to repeat those thanks in person.”

She then requested him to be seated, and began some general enquiries after his family

His answers sensible and polite; the unaffected ease and gentleness of his manners; and the expression of good-humour and benevolence that lighted up his countenance, so highly interested Lady Delmington, that she was tempted, more than once, to doubt the possibility of his being the son of a man she had always had reason to consider as his direct opposite in every thing. His mother's virtues, however, recurred to her memory; and, in this amiable young man, she rejoiced to behold the worthy successor of so excellent a woman, forgetting whilst she conversed with him the object of his visit, and the delay of her little inmate.

Mr. Somerset, however, at length drew out his watch, and starting at the lateness of the hour, arose with an intention to depart. Lady Delmington pressed him to stay tea; but he assured her it was im-

possible, as he had a friend waiting for him at Lynton, with whom he was that night to travel several miles further.

“ I shall be in your neighbourhood, however,” added he, “ some weeks, and if your Ladyship will permit me, shall certainly do myself the honour of calling again very soon.”

“ I earnestly hope you will,” cried Lady Delmington, “ since, not only the untimely absence of our little Clarentine, but the shortness of this visit, calls loudly upon you for another.”

She then rang the bell, and Mr. Somerset's carriage being ready, he bowed, and left the house.

Surprised and concerned at the extraordinary, and now, almost alarming disappearance of her ward, Lady Delmington went out on the lawn as soon as her visitor had left her, to enquire of her children, which way they thought it probable she was gone, and how long she had quitted them. To the first of these questions they were unable to give any answer; to the last, they replied, that neither she nor Emma had been with them for near two hours.

Lady

Lady Delmington's uneasiness, encreased by this intelligence, now prompted her to send a servant into the village in search of Clarentine; but at the very moment she was giving directions to that effect, one of the little girls came running towards her, to say Mr. Somerset's carriage was coming back again!

At this unexpected return Lady Delmington went out, and waited near the entrance of the hall the approach of the carriage, which slowly drove up, and at length stopped. The servant who attended it sprung off his horse, and opening the door, the first object Lady Delmington beheld was the young Clarentine, pale and senseless, supported in the arms of Mr. Somerset.

Terrified beyond all measure, and almost dreading to enquire what had happened, Lady Delmington had only voice to utter an incoherent exclamation, before Mr. Somerset, alighting, and lifting Clarentine out of the carriage, carried her himself into the house, and placed her on a sofa in the nearest room.

There, whilst Lady Delmington's woman, who had been summoned, was busied in using every means for her reco-

very, and the rest of the children were all standing round her, with looks of consternation and dismay, Mr. Somerset gave a brief account of the accident that threw her into that situation.

“ I was driving extremely quick through the village, when, from a cottage by the road side, I saw a young person rush forward almost under the horses’ feet, and with an agonizing shriek call out repeatedly to the driver to stop. Providentially he did so in time to save her; and when I jumped out, I found her stretched upon the ground, grasping firmly with one hand the cloaths of a child, to secure whom, it was, in all probability, she endangered herself so much. I raised her up instantly, and attempted to comfort and restore her; but her fright, and the fall that succeeded it, had totally deprived her of speech and motion, and had not the child directed me whither to convey her, I should have been compelled to have left her with the people of the cottage.”

“ That child,” cried Lady Delmington, raising her eyes in thankfulness to heaven, “ that child was mine—my little Emma! Where, where is she now, Sir !”

“ In

“ In perfect safety, Madam, with a woman who appeared just as I was coming away, and said she was your Ladyship’s housekeeper.”

Clarentine at that moment beginning to stir, Lady Delmington’s whole attention was directed towards her. In a few moments her recollection seemed to be returning, and looking with surprise around her, like a person just waking from a heavy stupor, she uttered in a low voice the name of Emma—asked if she was safe; and, on being answered in the affirmative, fixed her eyes with an air of wild astonishment on young Somerset, and said to her aunt——

“ Who is that ?”

Somerset smiled; and Lady Delmington answered—

“ An old friend of your’s, my love, though a forgotten one; Mr. William Somerset, your cousin.”

“ Mr. William Somerset!” repeated Clarentine, a faint glow of pleasure tingling her pale cheeks. “ Oh, I ought never to have forgotten *him*! His former kindness to me—”

“ Hush, hush, my dear Clarentine,” interrupted young Somerset, affectionately
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taking her hand, "this is not a time to strain your memory for instances of past friendship; we shall meet again very soon, I hope; when, if you are better, we will talk over former days, and renew our early acquaintance. Rest and quiet are, at present, what you most require; therefore, adieu—I shall wait upon Lady Delmington on Friday, at furthest."

Then congratulating her Ladyship upon the happy termination of this alarming event, he once more took leave, and departed.

When he was gone, Clarentine was interrogated by her aunt upon the subject of Emma; and asked how it happened, that, without having obtained permission, she had been so imprudent as to venture out with her so far?

This was a question she found it no difficult matter to answer satisfactorily.—The house-keeper, she said, having told her in the morning that Edgar's poor old nurse was very ill, she had desired to accompany her on a visit to her cottage, as soon as dinner was over. Emma, she added, being with her at that moment, the house-keeper herself had proposed taking her with them; and it was whilst they

they were talking to the nurse the sound of the carriage first alarmed her, and induced her, on finding Emma had run out into the road, to rush after her in that frantic manner.

This simple recital perfectly satisfied Lady Delmington, who expressed the utmost gratitude to her young ward for the courage and goodness of heart that had made her the means of preserving her helpless little charge.

CHAP II.

CLARENTINE Delmington was the daughter of Sir James Delmington's only brother, who, whilst abroad on his travels, had married a young foreigner of distinction, whose family, one of the proudest in France, had, on the discovery of the match, utterly renounced her, and thrown her wholly on the mercy of her husband's friends for support and countenance.—Young Delmington's father was still living, and received the first account of this unhappy affair, and of the arrival of his son
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in England, at the very time he was disposing himself to make his will ; and the consequence of this intelligence was, that, in a moment of passion and resentment, he totally disinherited this unfortunate young man, and died shortly afterwards, without either seeing him, or altering his cruel determination.

Penniless, hopeless, and deprived of every other resource, young Delmington wrote to his brother, Sir James, then in Italy, to state his situation, and implore his council and assistance. Before any answer could arrive, however, despair and indigence prompted him, forsaking his wife and infant child, to enlist into the military service of the East India Company, and to embark with the troops that were then setting sail for Bengal.

He had been gone nearly a week ; and his ill-fated wife, ignorant of the language of the country, desolate, and almost reduced to her last guinea, was weeping over her unconscious babe, when a lady in a very elegant carriage stopped at her door, and, without sending up her name, entered the house, and desired to be shewn

to

to Mrs Delmington's apartment. This friendly visitor was Mrs. Somerset, sister to Sir James and young Delmington, with whose recent embarkation and unhappy story she was already acquainted. To her at his departure, the melancholy wanderer had, by letter, recommended these innocent and pitiable sufferers.

"I am come, Madam," said she, in a voice of the most soothing kindness, as she advanced towards the lovely and astonished stranger, "to take you from this lonely and melancholy abode, and to offer you every consolation, and perform every service for you in my power. My name," added she, taking her hand, "is Somerset; I am sister to your husband—and already in anticipation sister, and friend to you."

"Ah! Madam," cried the young foreigner, pressing to her bosom the hand that held hers,—“I flattered not myself, with the hopes of exciting this generous sensibility in any English heart—I have forfeited all claim to English kindness!—But this infant,” continued she, looking at the child she held in her arms—“this infant may perhaps better merit your goodness; she was born in your land, she
is

is your country-woman, and surely ought not, in justice, to share the punishment due to her mother's errors!"

That mother, not yet eighteen, born to affluence, long inured to splendour, a stranger till now alike to care and adversity, survived but a short time the departure of her husband; she went into a deep decline, and expired some months after in the house, almost in the arms of Mrs Somerset.

Thus early deprived of both her parents, the little Clarentine was now committed entirely to the protection of her father's family. Mr Somerset for some time suffered his wife's compassion for her to exert itself without restraint; but shortly growing weary of a preference he felt not himself inclined to bestow; meanly jealous of the attachment his wife and son had conceived for her, he first murmured at, then openly opposed every new act of benevolence Mrs. Somerset's kindness of heart prompted her to perform. Anxious for the fate of her interesting little ward, on the first appearance of this illiberal discontent, Mrs. Somerset applied to Sir James for advice and assistance, and on his return to England, heard with gratitude

titude and delight, that he now meant to take the charge of his niece wholly on himself.

She was accordingly, when just entering her sixth year, removed to Delmington House, and received by Sir James and his wife with equal pity and affection. From that hour she had constantly resided with them, and since the death of her first patroness Mrs. Somerset, known no other protectors, no other friends.

To save appearances Mr. Somerset, it is true, had written twice or thrice in the course of seven years, to ask after her; he had once even, when on a visit in the same county, honoured her with a personal enquiry; but never had testified the least intention of assuring her a provision, or, wealthy as he was, of participating with the Delmingtons in the expences of her board and education.

Not so young William; though seven years older than the little Clarentine, and but rarely at home whilst she inhabited his father's house, his mother's expressions of fondness towards her, the solicitude and tenderness with which she always spoke of her, had made a deep and lasting impression on his generous heart. He
pitied

pitied her for her own, and loved her for the sake of his mother; she had been her favourite, her nursling, the object for many years of all her thoughts; and William, who cherished Mrs. Somerset's memory with enthusiasm, transferred to the child of her adoption a share of that affection, he had, when living, felt for herself.

As often therefore as he had an opportunity he had written to Clarentine, and sent her, in token of his remembrance, such little presents as her age made acceptable, and his finances would allow; and when, after a silence of nine years, the news arrived of the death of her father, who was killed in an engagement between the English and Mahrattas, then at war with each other, he dictated to his tutor from a sick bed, and signed afterwards a solemn promise, by which he bound himself, whenever his age would permit, and he came into possession of the fortune he must one day inherit, to settle upon her an independent competency for life. This paper, drawn up as he hoped with all due formality, and written by a clergyman, the old and faithful friend of his mother, who had seen and often noticed Clarentine

tine in her infancy, he sent to Sir James the moment it was sealed, and from that hour had invariably looked upon as a sacred and irrevocable engagement, which he meant religiously to fulfil.

On receiving this extraordinary deed from a youth not yet seventeen, Sir James was affected by the excellence of disposition it denoted, yet by no means flattered into a hope, that such promises were likely ever to be realized. The dissipation of that world into which his nephew was just entering, the temptations he might have to put his money to less benevolent purposes, or at least, the versatility and various pursuits of his age—all, all, he feared, would contribute to erase from his remembrance this act of youthful generosity; to trust to it therefore as certain, would be cruelty to its object; and Sir James felt too forcibly the helplessness of her situation, to harbour for a moment the idea of consigning her for future support to the emergency of so unstable a dependence.

With so large a family as he had, it was not to be supposed he could do much for her: a limited provision however, nearly equal to what he left his own daughters, he
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meant to bequeath her, but was taken suddenly ill before he could put this benevolent design in execution, and breathed his last a few days after, leaving her as absolutely dependent upon his wife, as she had been upon him.

From motives of regard to her husband's memory, as well as from ignorance where to place her, Lady Delmington still continued to take charge of her, and to treat her with undeviating kindness and affection. She was brought up with her own children, more as if born of the same parents, than as if stationed amongst them by accidental circumstances, and during the first seven years of her residence with them, scarcely for a moment had had cause to regret her situation.

Since the birth of little Emma, who was now three years old, and the death of Sir James, many of the servants of Delmington House had been discharged. Clarentine then undertook the sole care of Emma, slept with her, dressed her, and was her constant companion. Lady Delmington felt the less reluctance to this, as she knew the child was uncommonly fond of her young Governess, and as she perceived, that though of an age, when
most

most girls require constant observance themselves, Clarentine had prudence enough to preserve her little charge from danger, and penetration enough to discover, and check with mildness, all her infantine caprices and follies.

The partiality of Edgar for his little cousin, who had long been his distinguished favourite, made him at first view this new office in the light of a degradation, and he often expressed to his brother his discontent on the subject. Frederick, though far less interested in the cause, for some time joined in declaring the same sentiments, and both conceived a strong, but short-lived aversion to the innocent child. Clarentine, however, at length reasoned them out of this absurd prejudice; protested she had herself solicited the trust and far from feeling inclined to murmur at, considered it as the only means she had of testifying her gratitude to their mother, for her kindness to herself. This explanation somewhat appeased Edgar, and totally satisfied Frederick; yet as often as they could, they sought to draw her from the nursery, and engage her to partake in their own amusements. To pacify them, she sometimes complied,
though

though always glad to seize the first opportunity of eluding their vigilance, in order to slip from them.

By degrees, however, their constant readiness to oblige her (and even Frederick loved to oblige her); their good-nature in desisting from whatever seemed to give her pain; their warmth in supporting her cause whenever any difference arose between her and their sisters, won her little heart, and taught her to prefer their society to almost every other. Not however in their boisterous and turbulent hours did she so much love them, as when sitting on a bench at the end of the garden, with Edgar on one side, and Frederick on the other, she could pore over with them some of the delightful adventures in the *Arabian Nights*; or wonder, laugh, and cry by turns, at the miraculous escapes of *Robinson Crusoe*, and the affectionate simplicity of his man *Friday*.

Many also were the opportunities she had of rewarding them for their friendly zeal, on different occasions, in her behalf. If by some wild and boyish trick they had excited Lady Delmington's displeasure, Clarentine apologized, Clarentine pleaded for them, and obtained a quicker pardon;

pardon ; if, after running about the whole afternoon, they returned at evening heated and alarmed, to recount some pickle-exploit, or fearful misadventure, Clarentine hurried them to their room, softened the intelligence in her disclosure of it to their mother, and carried them in secret whatever she could beg from the house-keeper, or save unsuspected from her own supper.

Once, too, poor Edgar had been extremely ill. A fever, the consequence of having over-heated himself, rendered him delirious near a week, and threw him into imminent danger. Clarentine, then about eleven years old, scarcely left his room a moment, shared in all his mother's fatigue, helped to beguile the long hours of her confinement and attendance ; read, talked to him by his bed side when he got better, and suffered no one but herself to administer to him the medicines that were prescribed ; neither from any one else would Edgar, when sensible, receive them ; and upon no one else would he lean for support, when first beginning slowly to pace his chamber.

Thus, in reciprocal acts of kindness, were spent their earliest years ; and thus began

began an attachment equally delightful to both parties, equally sincere, and equally undisguised.

CHAP. III.

THE time of Edgar's absence was to Clarentine the most melancholy she had ever known. She had now no gay and partial companion constantly to partake in her amusements; to walk out with her after Emma was in bed; to rejoice with when any particular indulgence was granted her: with Edgar, her chief source of happiness was gone, and all that remained proportionably diminished in value.

Yet Clarentine had a heart disposed to love with fondness all around her. Lady Delmington she honoured and respected like a second mother. Harriet, her eldest daughter, she regarded in the light of a sister, and felt inclined to bestow on her all a sister's tenderness; but Harriet was unsteady and capricious; one day mildly affectionate, the next rude and imperious.

Sophia, the second sister, with a heart that did her honour, and a disposition

the most friendly and generous, was however so extremely wild and thoughtless, that notwithstanding the warmth and sincerity of her attachment for Clarentine, it was not in her nature to forbear tormenting her four-and-twenty hours together. She had too much of her brother Frederick about her, indeed, to respect *any body*, so long, except her mother, and even *her*, she often caught herself involuntarily endeavouring to perplex and surmise.

By every other post, letters either from Edgar or Frederick regularly arrived, and lightened up every face at Delmington House with smiles of gladness. Clarentine treasured hers from Edgar even with romantic fondness; read them all till she had learnt them by heart, and valued them above every other thing in her possession.

Meanwhile, Lady Delmington, though she was herself in most respects qualified to educate her daughters, could not but be sensible there were many little elegant accomplishments proper for girls of family, she was by no means adequate to teaching them. Dancing, music, and drawing were of this number; and, as at Lytton, the

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nearest town, there was a large boarding-school, she soon learnt also there were masters, such as she required, who taught on very reasonable terms. Twice a week, therefore, they were summoned to Delmington House; and Clarentine, though nothing was absolutely paid for instructing her, by being suffered to assist at the lessons, reaped nearly as much benefit from them as the scholars themselves. In dancing and drawing, particularly, she made great progress; but music, though her speaking voice was soft and touching, she soon found would require far more time and application, than she had leisure to bestow upon it. There being but one instrument in the house, and that being almost always in use, she had few or no opportunities of practising; and therefore, as far as related to the scientific part of the art, in a very short time gave it up wholly; still, however, when alone, or with Emma, for her "sole auditress," she delighted to sing in wild, and not unpleasant tones, the simple ballads that had words she loved.

Every day Lady Delmington, in a large gothic chamber she called the *school-room*, assembled her little family to repeat to her
their

their lessons, receive their tasks for the following morning, read to her, and practise either music or drawing. When this was over, she made them sit down to work, and till two o'clock kept them seriously employed. The rest of the day, at least as much of it as they could spare from the business of learning their several lessons for the morrow, was their own, and might be spent in the garden, or the house, as they pleased.

The few families that had visited Lady Delmington since the death of Sir James, chiefly called in of a morning and returned before dinner, as it was well known she had given up all eating company the moment she became a widow. Sometimes, indeed, two or three of her nearest neighbours, during the long evenings of summer, came to her to tea. Neither Clarentine, nor her little cousins, however, appeared on these formal occasions for more than a quarter of an hour, during which, they drank their tea standing, eat their dry bread in utter silence, and then, making a profound curtsy, joyfully retired; Clarentine, to undress her little Emma, the Miss Delmingtons, to their own amusements.

One evening, about a fortnight after the departure of Edgar and Frederick, Lady Delmington received a second visit from Mr. Somerset. He came on horseback, and perceiving, as he approached the house, a group of children walking and conversing together near the avenue, dismounted, and giving his horse to his servant, drew near them. Clarentine instantly recollected him, and running up to him, her eyes sparkling with pleasure, offered to conduct him to her aunt.

Gratified by a reception so cordial, he accepted the proposal, took her by the hand, and walked with her into the hall, followed by the other children.

Lady Delmington, rejoicing again to see him, welcomed him with distinguished politeness; and the evening afterwards turning out extremely rainy, pressed him, with such unfeigned earnestness to accept a bed at her house, that she soon succeeded in her application, and prevailed upon him to send a note to his friend to inform him of the reason of his stay.

During the following day, the whole of which he spent at Delmington, Clarentine, enchanted with the mixture of vivacity

and softness in his character, with the extreme respect he paid to Lady Delmington, the pleasantry with which he treated her children, and, above all, the affectionate interest he seemed to feel for her, never, but when indispensably obliged to it by her attendance on Emma, left the room he sat in. The familiarity with which he addressed her could not have been humiliating, even had she been older; it seemed to be the effect of brotherly kindness and partiality; was never ill-bred, but always gentle, friendly, and indulgent.

Lady Delmington beheld with pleasure the regard he shewed her, and hoped much benefit might be derived from it to her young ward. William Somerfet, an only son; heir to immense possessions; so nearly allied to her; and, with a heart so beneficent and compassionate, could not, she thought, now he beheld her, reflect upon Clarentine's destitute circumstances, without feeling all those noble intentions he had formerly avowed for her revived, in their fullest force. At all events, his countenance and friendship could not but be desirable to her; and as such, was strengthened to the utmost of her Ladyship's power, by the well-merited praises

and encomiums she bestowed on the heart and disposition of her niece.

At parting, Mr. Somerfet, after taking leave of Clarentine, with a degree of tenderness that deeply touched her, put into her hand five guineas, and promised to send her a watch, and some books he had before mentioned to her, the moment he got to town. She saw him set off with tears—walked with him to the end of the avenue, and when he there mounted his horse, and again bade her farewell, called out to him repeatedly to come again, and followed him with her eyes till he was out of sight.

C H A P IV.

THE first year of the two Delmingtons absence from home was almost expired, and their approaching holidays were drawing near, when, at once to celebrate their return, and the birth-day of her eldest daughter, who had now entered her fourteenth year, Lady Delmington announced her intention of giving a ball to
all

all the little gentry in the neighbourhood. The girls cheeks glowed at this intelligence; they rapturously embraced their indulgent mother, and springing towards the door, flew up to Clarentine's room to impart to her the transporting tidings.

Faithful to her promise, Lady Delmington, on the second day after her son's return, issued her cards of invitation; gave orders to have the drawing-room prepared, and sent to Lynton to bespeak the best band of music the town would afford.

The happy day at length arrived, and the little family was just sitting down to dinner, every heart beating with expectation of approaching pleasure, when, with a slow and measured pace, they saw driving up the avenue, an old-fashioned post-chaise, attended by a grey-headed footman, who alighting at the hall door, rang, and announced Mrs. Margaret Harrington.

Frederick, on hearing the name, started in an extacy of delight, from his chair, and cutting two or three mad capers, held out his hand to Sophia, who sat next him, and shaking it till he absolutely compelled her to cry out for mercy, eagerly ex-

claimed—"I give you all joy, good folks! for if the old Lady is not driven to distraction by the news of our intended Ball, my name is not Frederick! She could not have come at a better time!—Lord! how she will rave!"

This idea so fully possessed, and so highly entertained him, that it was with much difficulty his mother could persuade him to be quiet, or prevent his running out himself to announce the news to her unexpected guest.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Margaret, who seemed bent upon putting the whole house into confusion, was issuing forth her commands concerning her baggage at the entrance of the hall, from whence, with the same stately pomposity, she afterwards proceeded to the dining parlour.

Lady Delmington politely advanced towards the door to receive her; there was nothing cordial in her countenance, however, when she addressed her, nothing affectionate in her voice; for Mrs. Margaret had the misfortune of having been, time out of mind, her Ladyship's decided aversion.

To account in some measure for this antipathy, it is necessary to trace a faint sketch

sketch of Mrs. Margaret's person and character. She was first cousin to the late Sir James, and at this period considerably turned of fifty.

Tall, thin, and masculine, in height and figure she was truly formidable! Her face was long and narrow, but composed of features, which though large had once been handsome. Her voice was extremely loud and harsh—her manners blunt, repulsive, and characteristic of the mind within—a mind at once haughty, uncultivated, and filled with prejudices the most vulgar and illiberal.

The marriage of *her* relation, Sir James Delmington, Bart. with the daughter of a needy spendthrift, an untitled Commoner, had excited her ire to a degree almost of madness! The girl's beauty, she averred, was no excuse; a thousand beauties cried matches in the streets—sold apples at a stall, yet were not therefore supposed to be qualified to fill a distinguished rank in society. It was setting his brother a pernicious and dangerous example—would bring ruin upon his family, and disgrace upon himself!

Yet this *fair beggar*, this *needy spendthrift's* daughter, had been well received by the

rest of her husband's relations; was known to possess an excellent understanding, uncommon elegance of manners, and a feeling and generous heart. At her father's death also she came into a fortune of ten thousand pounds, though, till after that event, it is true she added nothing to Sir James's income.

The asperity and unauthorized resentment shewn by Mrs. Margaret on this occasion was yet more inflamed, on her first hearing of the imprudent connection Sir James's brother had formed abroad. She imputed it solely to the precedent he had given him—raved publicly against them both; and for many years avoided all intercourse, as well with Mrs. Somerset as Sir James, because the former had given refuge to her brother's orphan—and the latter dared to be happy with a woman *she* had not selected.

An unsuccessful attempt to get into Parliament at a general election, the close of which saw him entirely thrown out, first prompted Sir James, terrified on account of his children at the temporary derangement of his affairs, to make overtures of reconciliation with the much exasperated Mrs. Harrington. She was rich, had no
2 lineal

lineal heirs, and had long declared her irrevocable determination of remaining single for life.

Fortunately for Sir James, Mrs. Margaret's invincible curiosity, united to a love of rambling neither age nor infirmities could conquer, facilitated the endeavours of their mutual friends, and once more brought her to his house. She had never seen Lady Delmington, and, uncharitable as she had been in her censures, longed most ardently to behold her.

Lady Delmington, naturally inclined to satire, by no means favourably prepossessed towards Mrs. Margaret, and at that period young, gay, and inconsiderate, saw her not for the first time, without feeling strongly tempted to retaliate her own ridicule with interest. She compelled herself however, in Sir James's presence, to behave to her with the most exact decorum; but, in his absence, though she never commenced, always readily supported that *aigre-doux* sort of conversation, which two people, hating each other, yet willing to keep up appearances, so well know how to render intelligible and mortifying. Their discourse was profusely

intermixed with all those ceremonies and unmeaning phrases, habitual good breeding on one side, and a desire of concealing her secret sentiments on the other, rendered it necessary for them to utter. No opportunity was suffered to escape, after a sentence of more than usual bitterness had been spoken, of begging each other's pardon, and hoping what had been said gave no offence! All which was uttered in a tone of voice, and an expression of countenance so diametrically opposite to the politeness of the words themselves, that neither could for a moment be mistaken as to their real meaning.

Such, during the six weeks of Mrs. Margaret's first visit, was the way in which the two ladies spent their tête-à-tête hours: and, such was the increased dislike, not to use a stronger term, with which they parted, that but once had they ever met since.

Lady Delmington, whose character was now mellowed by time, whose spirits were depressed by the cares of so large a family, and who, from regard to the interest of her children, saw the necessity of treating Mrs. Margaret with greater deference, received her, as has already been said, with

with infinite good breeding, but without any addition of attachment.

Being all seated at table, the sweet and innocent countenance of the young Clarentine placed next her little Emma, attending to, and serving her with the assiduity of a fond mother, attracted the notice, and called forth all the penetrating powers of Mrs. Harrington. She had never seen her since she was a mere child : but now, at almost thirteen, tall, light and graceful, with a face in which softness was blended with intelligence, archness with good-humour, and animation with sensibility, she seemed to be an object worthy greater attention. Mrs. Margaret beheld her with involuntary admiration—with mingled distrust and surprise ; distrust on account of the danger that might soon accrue to Sir Edgar from a residence with so fascinating a creature, and surprise at the astonishing improvement, she could not but internally allow, a few years had made in her whole appearance.

Dinner over, the children, but in particular Clarentine, who had been cruelly distressed by her unfeeling scrutiny, gladly withdrew to communicate to each other

other the several opinions they had formed of their new guest.

“ Will she stay long with us, Edgar, do you think ?” said Sophia, “ I am sure I hope not,” said her sister.

“ You hope not, silly girl ?” said Frederick, “ Why I expect more amusement in one week, from the disturbance she will create among us, than we could possibly obtain in a month without her. It is reckoned high-treason to plague any of you ; but I flatter myself, *this* good lady will be left entirely to my management.”

“ Indeed !” cried Harriet—“ Do you think then mama would have received her so civilly, if she had designed to make her over to you for a play-thing, and an amusement ?”

Frederick laughed, but made no answer ; and after some further conversation on the same subject, they separated—Edgar and his brother to ramble down to the village, and their sisters to dress for the evening.

An hour before the company was expected to arrive, Lady Delmington having some necessary orders to give, apologized to Mrs Harrington for leaving her, and proposed with a laugh sending for her children to sit with her.

“ Aye”

“Aye,” cried Mrs Harrington, “do so.”

Accordingly they were summoned, but not being all ready, Clarentine and Harriet went down first.

If in her plain morning frock, Clarentine had excited so much observation, how did she in her present simple, yet elegant dress astonish the already too apprehensive Mrs. Harrington? Confounded and dismayed, she looked at her with so jealous and suspicious an eye, that the timid girl shrunk abashed from the survey, and blushing deeply, with a mixed sensation of resentment and mortification, was precipitately retiring. Mrs. Harrington, however, called her back.—

“Come hither child,”—said she.

Clarentine slowly, and reluctantly advanced—

“Pray are you to dance this evening?”

In a voice scarcely audible, Clarentine answered, yes, she believed so.

“O, you do? and who with, may I ask.”

The severity of tone and aspect with which this question was uttered, so totally disconcerted Clarentine, that trembling, and almost in tears, she faintly replied,

“With

“ With my cousin Edgar, Madam.”

“ With your cousin Edgar ?” disdainfully repeated Mrs. Harrington,—“ No, no, child, you must not expect it ; I shall speak to his mother upon the subject, it shall not be.”

Then perceiving through the transparent muslin of her frock a gold watch, suspended to her side by a very elegant chain, she added,

“ How came you by that watch ? Who gave it you ? *your cousin Edgar ?*”

“ No, Madam,” answered Clarentine, unable any longer to refrain from tears—
“ Mr. William Somerset.”

“ O, he did ? there would be no harm if Mr. William Somerset would do something more useful for you. Such trinkets as these are not at all fitted to your situation.”

At that moment Edgar and Frederick, unconscious of what was passing, entered the room together. The former seeing Clarentine standing before Mrs Harrington, confused, humbled, her head sunk upon her bosom, her cheek wet with tears, cast a look of indignation at her unmerciful persecutor, and flying up to her,
took

took her hand, and said in a voice of the most affectionate concern—

“What is the matter, my dearest Clarentine? Who has distressed you thus? Come, come with me.”

As he spoke he drew her towards the door, and before Mrs. Harrington could oppose it, led her away followed by Frederick, who with a loud laugh, snapping his fingers the moment he got into the hall, exclaimed—

“And this is the old crab we are all to be so civil to, is it? She sets out oddly for one who is to exact such universal reverence!”

“Hush, hush, Frederick, for heaven sake!” cried the terrified Clarentine—
“Suppose she should hear you!”

“O for that matter,” answered Frederick, “I should not much care if she did; it would save me the trouble of declaring war against her to her face.”

Clarentine, trembling lest this conversation should be overheard, could now be prevailed upon to stay no longer: but hastening through the hall, she was running up stairs, when Edgar following her, begged her to stop and tell him where she was going?

“To

“To my own room,” answered she—“I am determined not to come down, nor to see her again this evening.”

Edgar in vain besought, entreated her to alter her resolution. She was inflexible; her pride was hurt, and a spirit of obstinacy awakened in her breast that no arguments could subdue. Edgar therefore was compelled to give up the attempt, and to suffer her, however reluctantly, to proceed.

The chamber that Clarentine inhabited was situated in a remote part of the house, at the end of a long gallery, that detached it from all the other rooms upon that floor. Just under it was the ball-room; and she had not been seated half an hour, when from below the sound of music ascended through her casements. For a moment she was tempted to forget her anger, and run down; but the words of Mrs. Harrington, her dreadful looks, and the absolute prohibition she had received to dance with the only partner by whom she could have felt any pleasure in being selected; all these circumstances recurring to her memory, she persisted in remaining where she was. Saddened, however, by the gloomy stillness of her own apartment,
when

when compared to the mirth and gaiety that reigned below, she rose with an intention of going into the gallery to call for a light : but before she reached the door, the housemaid entered with little Emma whom she was coming to put to bed. Clarentine, glad of any thing to do, undertook the office herself ; the maid set down the candle and went away.

When the child was undressed, and laid down, all Clarentine's restlessness returned. She endeavoured, however, to amuse herself with a book, but found it impossible. Distant voices, the noise of opening and shutting doors, and above all the cruel sound of the music, perpetually interrupted her. Without well knowing why, she now began to feel something like resentment against Edgar : he ought not, she thought, to have remained so long without again attempting to persuade her down—neither was it kind in his sisters to neglect her so entirely—"I am sure," cried she—"I could not have borne their absence upon such an occasion, with so much indifference !"

Whilst she was thus ineffectually tormenting herself, a light step approaching through the gallery reached her ear. She listened,

listened, and presently heard herself called. It was the voice of Sophia, who ignorant of the cause of her seclusion, came to hasten her down.

“Clarentine,” cried she, “come and see who is just arrived; you will be so rejoiced! Who do you think it is?”

“Indeed,” answer’d Clarentine rather peevishly—“I shall not attempt to guess,—Nobody, I dare say, that takes the least interest in any thing that relates to me.”

“O well, if you are so indifferent about the matter, I do not wish to force my intelligence upon you; and so adieu.”

Then humming the air of a country dance, she gaily tripped away.

Clarentine, though grateful for this visit, felt but the more irritated against Edgar for his neglect, and determined, cost her what it would, not to quit her chamber.

Sophia had been gone about ten minutes, when a new step was heard in the gallery; and the next moment her door was opened by young Somerset!

The book she held dropped from her hand, and she eagerly ran to him.

“Why you poor little solitary creature!” cried he, advancing towards her,

“What

“What is the reason you shut yourself up in this strange manner? I won’t suffer it any longer, my Clarentine; you shall go down with me this instant.”

Clarentine smiled; and glad to be at length overcome, suffered herself without much opposition to be drawn out of the room.

In their way down stairs, he told her he had been in the house about half an hour; had heard nothing before his arrival of the intended *fête*, but on alighting was extremely surprised to observe the number of carriages and bustle of servants at the door. Lady Delmington, however, when she saw him, had in a moment explained to him the whole business, and conducted him into the ball-room, “where,” continued he, “after remaining some time and not perceiving you, I enquired after you of one of the young ladies, who related to me all that had passed between you and Mrs. Harrington. Determined, notwithstanding, to bring you down, I sent up Sophia to call you; but as she came back unsuccessful, I ventured to ask the way to your room myself, and was shewn to it by Sir Edgar, who left me at
the

the head of the stairs upon hearing his mother call to him from the hall."

Clarentine reconciled to herself by this proof of her own importance, enchanted by the kindness of young Somerset, and exhilarated by her nearer approach to the lights and music, entered the ball-room with glowing cheeks, and eyes that beamed with pleasure.

Her conductor, declaring she should be his partner for the evening, led her towards a set that was forming for country dances, and stationed her next to Harriet, who, as well as her sister, seemed rejoiced to see her, and was lavish in her expressions of disgust towards Mrs. Harrington.

The rest of the evening, Clarentine spent with undisturbed satisfaction. Her considerate partner, who seemed bent upon making her amends for the little mortification she had sustained, by the cheerfulness and good-humour he exerted himself, and infused into all around her, scarcely left her a moment, and evinced so sincere and benevolent a desire of rendering her happy, that her whole heart felt, and gratefully acknowledged the obligation.

Once

Once however, in the course of the evening, her gaiety was for a few moments clouded, by observing a degree of gloom on the brow of Edgar as unusual as it was evident. She was tempted at first to go up to him and enquire the cause, but lost sight of him before she could cross the room, and afterwards saw him no more.

At supper she asked Sophia what was become of him, and learned with great concern that he had complained of not being well, and was gone to bed.

“To tell you the truth,” continued Sophia, “I think that was the best place for him; he is so horrid cross, and appeared so discontented with every thing the whole time he staid, that I was vastly glad to see him walk off.”

“And I,” said Clarentine, smiling—“am vastly glad to hear he was *cross*, as that convinces me he was not ill, since nobody ever bore illness with so much sweetness and patience.”

At half past eleven the whole party separated: and soon after twelve, every inhabitant of Delmington House was in bed.

C H A P. V.

THE next morning, before the rest of the family assembled to breakfast, young Somerset and Clarentine met in the great parlour.

She approached him with the same alacrity, the same smiling countenance she had worn on the preceding evening, and praising him for his early rising, invited him to walk with her in the garden. He agreed to it readily, drew her hand under his arm, and as they proceeded across the lawn said——

“I wish to have some serious conversation with you, my dear Clarentine; but may I rely upon your sincerity? will you speak to me with openness? consider me as your friend, and disguise nothing from me?”

Clarentine, startled at this preface, looked anxiously at him, and half hesitating said——

“Dear Mr. Somerset, what do you mean? You really frighten me”——

“Believe me, my love,” cried he, “that was far from being my intention; I will

will ask nothing you ought to conceal—nothing but what it may be for your benefit to disclose. Tell me therefore, and tell me truly—are you happy in your present situation? Are you treated with kindness? I have important reasons for wishing to know; and trust me you shall never repent the confidence you place in me.”

“ Oh !” cried Clarentine earnestly, “ you could not have questioned me upon a subject I could more readily have answered; and I rejoice that you have given me such an opportunity of expressing my gratitude to Lady Delmington, my love for all her family! Had I been her child, her *only* child, she could not have treated me with more tenderness; the very servants are taught by her to behave to me with respect and attention, and not a creature in the house but seems to feel a mixture of pity and affection for me.”

The warmth with which she spoke brought a colour into her cheeks, an animation into her countenance, that gave ample testimony to the truth of every word she had uttered. Young Somerset, perfectly convinced, pressed her hand, and said, “ Enough, my Clarentine; I am

satisfied, and earnestly hope you will never have cause to speak with less enthusiasm; if, however, that should unhappily one day be the case, remember you have in me a friend, whom no time, no circumstances can ever change; one who loves you tenderly, who will act in your behalf with the zeal of a brother, and upon every occasion take the deepest interest in your welfare. Write to me therefore, whenever any difficulty or embarrassment occurs: make me your confidant; trust to me implicitly; and be assured, that whether distant or near you, it shall always be my first study to afford you the best advice and assistance in my power. We are related too closely not to love each other; the same mother cherished, the same house contained, the same kindness fostered us; then, let us not, as we advance in life, neglect to cultivate that affection which sprung up in our infancy, and was beheld with so much pleasure by our mutual benefactress!"

Clarentine, softened even to tears by the kindness of this speech, had no voice to articulate her thanks: she could only express them by her looks, and the fervent
gratitude

gratitude with which she raised the hand of the generous speaker to her lips: Somerset hastily withdrew it.

“This is too much, my Clarentine,” cried he, “you owe me nothing, but, on the contrary, will confer a very essential obligation upon me by conforming to the directions I have to give you. Perhaps you wonder at the seriousness with which I have spoken; let me explain to you its cause. I am upon the point of leaving you, of leaving England, probably for a considerable time.”—Here Clarentine started, and fixed her fine blue eyes fearfully on his face—Somerset went on—“In my absence many alterations may take place. You may be distressed, unhappy, and have no one near you to whom you can apply for relief and assistance. Take then this pocket-book, preserve it carefully, and before I go, I will explain myself more fully as to the use to which its contents are meant to be assigned.”

Clarentine, deeply affected as she had been before, was now quite overpowered. She sobbed audibly as he put the pocket-book into her hand, and hiding her face,

funk, unable to speak, upon a bench near her. Somerset, at first, endeavoured to compose, and restore her to greater calmness; but soon finding the attempt vain, he ceased speaking, and in a few minutes left her.

At breakfast, he publicly announced his intended departure; said his ship was to sail in a short time, and that therefore he must be on board within three days at furthest. Lady Delmington pressed him earnestly to spend those three days at her house; but he excused himself on account of his father, who would, he added, expect to see him in town before he went. "I shall be happy, however," continued he, "to remain here till to-morrow morning, when, by five o'clock I must be gone."

Lady Delmington, grateful for this short delay, thanked him for granting it, and soon after retired with her daughters and Clarentine to their usual morning avocations, whilst Mrs. Harrington went out alone to walk.

Frederick during their absence attached himself wholly to young Somerset; prevailed upon him to enter into a minute detail of his way of life on board a ship; asked

asked how long he had been in the service? who was his captain? and a multitude of other questions, which, though wearisome to Somerset, he good-humouredly answered, frequently laughing at the boy's curiosity, and wondering to what it could possibly tend.

Meanwhile Edgar leaning back in his chair near the window, and pretending to read, neither joined in the conversation, nor appeared at all to hear it. His eyes were occasionally glanced towards young Somerset with an air of sullen discontent, then hastily withdrawn as if fearful of observation; and at last, suddenly rising, he flung away his book, snatched up his hat, and abruptly quitted the room.

After dinner the whole family walked out; and Somerset, detaching himself from the rest of the party, engaged Clarentine to accompany him, and renewed the conversation of the morning.

“Since I have the pleasure,” said he, “my dear Clarentine, of finding you more in a situation to listen to me than when I last talked with you, suffer me now to enter upon the explanation I promised you. Before my return from sea you will

be grown up, you will be of an age to expect that the tranquil and childish pleasures you have hitherto known will be changed for a life of far less serenity, nay, I fear contentment. Should any circumstances then occur to make you reasonably desirous of changing your abode, allow me to advise you in your choice of an asylum, and depend not upon your own judgment wholly in an affair of so much consequence."

Too much confounded to interrupt him, Clarentine listened with an air of profound attention, impatient for what was to follow, and scarcely comprehending what she had heard. Somerset saw her astonishment; but noticed it not, and thus proceeded.

"Far be it from me unfeelingly to alarm you with distressing predictions; and still further, by hinting to you what are my own distant apprehensions, to wish to instil into your mind a restless desire of change, or a jealous petulance and quickness in taking offence, that might involve you in apprehensions and distrust too painful to be supported by yourself, and too injurious to be forgiven by your friends.

All

All I design is to caution you against future possibilities; and to entreat you never to suffer your spirits to be depressed by imagining that, when an outcast from hence, you have no other eligible place of refuge."

"*An outcast from hence?*" repeated Clarentine, turning pale—"Good God! Mr. Somerset, can *that* ever happen?"

"I hope" answered he, taking her hand, "it never *will*—yet remember, it is not impossible; and even against the most distant casualties, as I said before, it is my wish to warn you. The term *outcast* was perhaps too harsh—my Clarentine can never find hearts hard enough to treat her with such undeserved cruelty. Were Lady Delmington alone in question, I would without hesitation undertake to answer for the continuation of her favour; but her present inmate, Mrs. Harrington may be less benevolently inclined. She is rich, and therefore will have power—is malevolent, and therefore to be dreaded."

"But why by *me*?" cried the astonished Clarentine—"I mean not, I design

not to offend her; then, wherefore should she injure me?"

With equal pity and affection, Somerset, when she paused, looked at her anxious face, sighed, and half overcome by her earnestness, was almost tempted in answer to her enquiries to pronounce the name of *Edgar*! He checked himself however, in time, and waving the subject, said—

“ We may be interrupted; and I have yet much to say to you. You have probably often heard me mention a Clergyman named Lenham who was my tutor, and resided at my father’s till I determined on my present profession. He now lives in a village near London called Hampstead, with his wife and two young pupils who have just been sent over from the West Indies. When you was a child he knew and loved you most affectionately; and to this day enquires after you with a degree of interest that plainly shews he still retains the same tenderness and regard for you. To him it is, therefore, my Clarentine, I would have you go, should the face of affairs here ever take the turn I have ventured to hint to you, I thought
• they

they might. Lady Delmington, when consulted, can never oppose it: she knows too well the excellence and benevolence of his character to apprehend any thing from trusting you to his care. His heart, his house will be alike open to you; and be assured that at all times he will be equally rejoiced to afford you shelter, consolation, and protection. The notes contained in the pocket-book I have left in your hands, will be of use in enabling you to prepare for such a journey, as well as in paying whatever expences you may incur after your removal.

The two Miss Delmingtons, at that moment, approaching and joining them; Somerset gave a different turn to the conversation; and shortly after they all returned to the house.

The impression made upon the mind of Clarentine, by the alarming cautions that had been given her, was deep and painful. Hitherto, without considering its stability, * “Content, and careless of to-morrow’s fate,” she had been satisfied to enjoy the

* Thomson.

advantages of her situation with cheerfulness and gratitude, thoughtless of the future, and delighted with the present. Not such, not equally serene was the picture that had now been traced to her. She distinguished in it, as one of its most prominent features, the horrors of banishment—perhaps of total desertion! Saw herself an alien without any natural friends, and assured support! The idea, to a mind so tender and affectionate, was terrific! It wrung her heart with agony; and when alone, drew tears of the bitterest anguish from her eyes!

“Oh! why,” cried she, “why did he paint to me so horrible a perspective? Who, I exiled from this dear house? I separated from Lady Delmington, from her children, from all I most love, most value upon earth? Would no one plead, no one supplicate for me? Could Edgar, who has so long called me his sister, his friend,—could he endure to have his Clarentine so unkindly treated? But alas! what could Edgar do! He is too young to have any authority, any weight; and all I can expect from the opposition he would make, is to be sent away in his absence,
never

never to be heard of, never to be seen by him again?"

This reflection was so afflicting, that she scarcely knew how to support it, and almost hated Mr. Somerset for having started it to her imagination.

When she met him at supper, the redness of her eyes told the effect their late conversation had had upon her. He looked at her with the most benevolent concern, pressed her hand as she seated herself next him, and half repented the distress his well-meant caution had given her. No one else, however, appeared to notice her dejection, the settled gloom and determined silence of Edgar rendering it less conspicuous; and the kindness of Somerset successfully exerting itself to draw off the general attention to foreign subjects.

At an early hour they separated for the night—Somerset, before she went, affectionately embracing Clarentine, and recommending to her in the most earnest manner to write to him as often as it was in her power.

C H A P. VI.

IT was long before the spirits of Clarentine recovered their usual tone, and an event which happened within a fortnight of young Somerset's departure tended but the more severely to aggravate their depression.

Frederick Delmington, charmed with the manliness of character, the frankness of disposition, so conspicuous in their late guest, felt an invincible desire, by embracing the same profession, to unite his own fate to that of a man, who was so bright an ornament to the way of life he had chosen. Restless, enterprising and dauntless, the vicissitudes of a sailor's career had no terrors for him, but on the contrary, seemed to promise far greater happiness than the sedentary occupations of a scholar, or the inglorious drudgery of a man of business.

After a short deliberation he made known his purpose to his mother, besought
her

her acquiescence to it, and protested that to no other would he now, or ever subscribe. Lady Delmington, equally surprized and displeased at his resolute tone, and firmly persuaded this new passion was but the boyish whim of a moment, coldly, but steadily answered, she had other views for him, and consequently requested him to mention his own no more.

Frederick scrupulously obeyed this last injunction, and was silent—but not therefore discomfited. Opposition seemed but the more to stimulate his purpose, and from that hour his imagination was wholly busied in finding means to facilitate its success.

One morning, about a week after, he was missed at the usual hour of breakfast, and though the most distant suspicion of the truth never occurred, diligently, yet vainly sought throughout the whole house. Lady Delmington concluding he was gone upon some wild expedition to Lynton, soon calmed her mind about him, and gave up all expectation of his return till dinner.

Dinner,

Dinner, however, came—in short, the entire day passed, and still he did not appear. His mother, almost distracted by her apprehensions, dispatched all the servants different ways in pursuit of him. Edgar likewise assisted in the search; his sisters weeping bitterly, terrified each other with the most dreadful conjectures, and the whole house was thrown into alarm and confusion; not a creature in it, Emma excepted, chusing to go to bed, even for an instant, during the night!

Had Lady Delmington been in a state of mind tranquil enough to have attended to her, the remarks, and unfeeling sarcasms of Mrs. Harrington on this occasion had alone been sufficient to have destroyed her. With the most inveterate malignity she was perpetually talking of the consequences to be inevitably expected from the unlimited indulgence of parents to their children—of the weakness of supposing that where all command was resigned, authority could be maintained, and of the folly of grieving at that which a little firmness, and better regulations might have totally prevented.

Once

Once in the midst of these cruel observations, Lady Delmington gained spirit to interrupt her—

“ Oh ! Madam,” cried she “ you never were a mother, else you could not, at a time like this, have the courage, the inhumanity, let me rather call it, to wring a mother’s heart by such reproaches !”

“ Well, well,” said Mrs. Harrington, “ go on as you have begun, continue this absurd forbearance, and depend upon it what you now suffer will be but the commencement of far heavier afflictions. I foresee much mischief from your blind partiality to that insinuating little serpent, Clarentine.”

Lady Delmington looked offended and amazed.

“ She is preparing eternal regret for you ;” continued Mrs. Harrington,— “ worming herself into the confidence of your whole family ; artfully gaining ground in your hearts ; and sooner or later will end, by undermining your peace, and blasting your fairest hopes !”

“ Who ? Clarentine ?” cried the indignant Lady Delmington, “ our guileless
and

and innocent Clarentine? How? by what means?

“By enslaving the affections of your son,” abruptly answered Mrs. Harrington, “by exciting and nourishing in his breast a degrading passion, caused by your own imprudence, confirmed by habit, and rendered unconquerable by her seductive wiles!”

“Impossible!” exclaimed Lady Delmington, “Clarentine is a mere child, as void of deceit, as ingenuous and artless as a new born infant! She cannot at her age have formed so deep-laid a plan; cannot be capable of *seducing* any human being!”

The entrance of one of Lady Delmington’s unsuccessful messengers here put an end to the conversation. She could listen to no more, her agony was unspeakable, and she hastily left the room.

The morning came, and brought with it no consolation—no intelligence; but saw the unhappy family in encreased affliction—pale, harrassed, and hopeless, seated round Lady Delmington, and fearfully listening to every sound—starting at every whisper!

On

On the evening of the second day of this terrifying suspense, it occurred to the wretched mother for the first time, that her son was perhaps gone to join young Somerset. She remembered his earnest petition to her on that subject; and was yet more confirmed in her suspicions by the account Edgar gave of the conversation Frederick had held with Somerset the day before his departure. This idea was joy, compared to the horrible uncertainty she had hitherto endured; and she instantly determined to write to Mr. Somerset for confirmation of its truth.

Clarentine, who was present whilst this subject was debated, immediately on hearing her aunt's resolution, drew from her pocket-book young Somerset's address.

"There, my dear Madam," said she, presenting it to Lady Delmington, "there is Mr. Somerset's direction. He left it with me, that whilst he remained in port, I might write to him as often as I chose."

"I am glad to find," said Lady Delmington, "he proposed such a correspondence; it proves his regard for you, my Clarentine, and you cannot too sedulously cultivate his favour. Do not you think

think with me, Edgar," added she, turning to her son who was standing at the window, "it is fortunate for her to have acquired in so near a relation, so partial a friend?"

Edgar changed colour—was silent a moment, and then in a hesitating voice, answered—

"Yes, certainly, I believe so."

"You believe so!" repeated his mother. "My dear boy, did you hear what I said?"

"Edgar hears nothing that is said to him now;" cried Clarentine, "he scarcely answers any body."

"*You* have no reason to complain," cried Edgar, reddening—"I have spoken to you of late, quite as often as you have to *me*."

Then flinging open a glass door that led from the parlour into the garden, he angrily left the room.

Lady Delmington, surprised at the unusual acrimony shewn upon this occasion by her son, now raised her eyes towards Clarentine, and saw, with increased astonishment, that her's were filled with tears!

"What

“What am I to believe from all this?” cried she, with some severity—“Have you, Clarentine, and Edgar been quarrelling?”

“Indeed, Madam,” answered Clarentine, “we have *not*; it is true Edgar, for some time past, has appeared to shun me; nay, he has even appeared desirous to avoid every opportunity of speaking to me; but *why* he should, or *how* I have offended him, believe me, dearest Madam, I know no more than yourself.”

“And how long,” said Lady Delmington, “has this shyness on his part subsisted?”

“Ever since the night of our ball,” answered Clarentine. “I wish, dearest Madam, you would speak to him upon the subject; perhaps he would explain himself to *you*, though he disdains doing it to *me*.”

“Well,” said Lady Delmington, “do not make yourself uneasy, my Clarentine, I *will* speak to him upon the subject, since between brothers and sisters (and you ought always to consider each other in that light) such causeless reserve and unkindness should never, for a moment, take place.”

Clarentine

Clarentine thanked her, and soon after retired; whilst Lady Delmington, but too apprehensive of the justice of Mrs. Harrington's suspicions, with regard to her son, sent immediately for him, in order to begin her interrogation.

With an air of mixed fullness and melancholy, he obeyed the summons. His mother, struck with secret dread, had scarcely presence of mind sufficient to disguise her alarm—he observed it not, however, and she thus began—

“What is the matter, my dear Edgar? Why are you so thoughtful and grave?”

Edgar endeavoured to assume a more unconcerned look; and answered with affected carelessness, he did not know.

“You are a silly boy,” resumed Lady Delmington, “to excite so much uneasiness in poor little Clarentine for nothing. She thinks you are seriously offended with her, yet feels perfectly unconscious of ever having given you cause. I am sure you have too much good sense to be capable of distressing her long by such conduct. What has she done? tell me, my son, and I will try to bring you to an accommodation. It is beneath your age
to

to keep up any thing like an absolute quarrel with her—remember, Edgar, you are sixteen, and she is still a mere child.”

During this speech, Edgar’s countenance underwent a variety of changes, and when his mother paused, he hastily and with much emotion said—

“ Clarentine cannot be called such an absolute *child*, I think, with any justice; she is only three years younger than I am.”

“ It is very little to the purpose,” cried Lady Delmington, “ whether in *your* opinion Clarentine is a child or not; by all reasonable people she will yet be long considered as such; though I own, in the present instance, she has shewn far more understanding than you have done, and therefore less deserves to be treated like one.”

“ I don’t perceive the good sense, however,” cried Edgar, with a forced smile, “ of complaining to you of what passes between ourselves.”

“ You must allow for her age,” again resumed Lady Delmington; “ she meant no harm, but merely spoke to me with a
view

view of learning, through my mediation, how she might best appease you."

"Appease me!" repeated Edgar in a softened voice, "what a word! I have not had any dispute with her--have not *told* her I was angry--then how came she ever to imagine I was so?"

"Perhaps," said Lady Delmington, smiling, "if you had had a literal quarrel with her, she might have been less hurt, since one of her chief complaints is, that you never speak to her."

Edgar could not bear an imputation like this. His own pride was wounded in that of Clarentine, and colouring deeply he replied--

"Good God! Madam--you speak of her, as if she was an *idiot*, as well as a *child*."

"Indeed Edgar," cried Lady Delmington, "you mistake me--I think for her time of life she is as sensible as one can reasonably expect: all I wish is, to persuade you to make proper allowances for her age, and to treat her with less neglect, lest she should be led by your coldness and disregard to imagine you
disdain

disdain her for her poverty, and wish to give her a disgust to this house."

"Who *I?*" cried Edgar, with a look that proved how distant from his heart was such a thought, "*I* disdain her? *I* wish to give her a disgust to this house? Ah! I know not whether I should not conceive a lasting one to it myself, were she ever to quit it!"

Lady Delmington, dismayed at the unrestrained warmth with which this was uttered, could with difficulty dissemble her displeasure. She sat some time meditating upon what she had heard; and at length, with as much calmness as she could command, said—

"At present I see no probability of her being separated from us; yet I am by no means certain I shall always have it in my power to retain her with me. It will give me great concern to part with her, let the day be as distant as it may; but still, should any eligible situation offer for her when she is a little older, I should think myself her enemy not to accept it."

Edgar petrified by the whole tenor of this speech—a speech so cold, so unlike every other his mother had ever uttered
concerning

concerning Clarentine, felt himself for a moment deprived of all power to answer it. Soon, however, recovering (his apprehensions for Clarentine made him bold) with respect, yet with firmness and courage, he said—

“ It appears so evident, that no situation *can* be eligible for her that removes her from beneath your roof, that I am far from believing it possible you should ever place her under any other; the orphan daughter of my father’s only brother must always be secure of an asylum with his children; they are bound, in honour to his memory, for ever to protect and cherish her.”

“ They are so, Edgar,” replied his mother, “ as long as that daughter *requires* such protection; but Clarentine is not now so wholly destitute of other friends as she was at her father’s death. William Somerset,” added she, steadfastly regarding her son whilst she spoke, “ seems not only willing, but anxious to serve her. He loves her affectionately—will have much at his disposal—is generous and friendly, and therefore it would certainly be injuring

juring her very essentially to oppose any plan he might propose for her advantage."

Edgar casting down his eyes, and at once losing all that steadiness of look and voice he had just before assumed, sighed deeply, and answered—

"If Clarentine prefers Mr. Somerset's protection, values more highly his friendship than ours, it would, I allow, be cruel to withhold her from it. I could not, however, have imagined that she would so easily have learnt to forget us. She has (comparatively, at least) known this Somerset so short a time—has hitherto appeared to love us all so much!"

"Your surprise at this sudden attachment," said Lady Delmington, "would cease, my son, were you to consider the extreme versatility of children's dispositions; whoever last shews them most kindness; whoever, by greater attention than usual, flatters their little vanity, is sure of becoming an exclusive favourite. Clarentine is tender and open-hearted—susceptible of the sincerest gratitude, gentle, sensible, and good; but Clarentine is no prodigy. She has her failings as well as other folks of her age, and perhaps at this mo-

ment prefers young Somerset to every other friend; it is very probable, however, that in another fortnight she may forget him, and attach herself again to us."

Then rising to leave the room, Lady Delmington said she had letters to write, and begged not to be disturbed till supper.

The cruel policy of his mother's artful insinuations left on the mind of Edgar a depression he knew not how to conquer. All she had said at the beginning of their conversation had but slightly affected him, compared to the real misery its conclusion had inflicted: Clarentine void of natural affection, wavering, unsteady, capricious in her attachments! Clarentine capable for a moment of forgetting a family she had so long resided with, of preferring to that family a man, whom so many years absence had rendered almost a stranger to her!—Oh! there was something in the idea so oppressive to his heart, that, for a time, it drove all other reflections from his mind, and filled him with the deepest sadness and regret! Pride, jealousy, and resentment, however, soon came to his relief,

lief, and gave him strength to conceal his inward sufferings, and to determine, during the remainder of his stay at home, sedulously to avoid her.

Clarentine, hoping much from the interference of Lady Delmington, was most grievously disappointed when she observed the increased coldness and neglect with which Edgar treated her after their conference—ascribing a part of his taciturnity and gloom, however, to his anxiety respecting Frederick, she forbore uttering any complaint, or seeking any explanation, quietly waiting till he should himself solicit one.

But Edgar was too indignant even to wish for any; and soon convinced her that, whatever might be his uneasiness concerning his brother, it was but the secondary cause of the change she so much lamented. The words of young Somerset on this painful discovery again occurred to her. “If this indifference in Edgar,” cried she, “should prove but the beginning of that general desertion he taught me to expect—if the loss of his affection should be but the forerunner of my total renunciation by the

rest of his family! What is to become of me? How am I to support their unkindness? How have I deserved it? Oh! preserve me, heaven! from ever living to see the day which is to alienate me so cruelly from the hearts of those, whose happiness I would purchase at the price of my own!"

C H A P. VII.

FREDERICK had been gone a week, when Lady Delmington received the following letter from young Somerset in answer to the enquiries she had made relating to her son:—

TO LADY DELMINGTON.

DEAR MADAM,

“ I am deeply concerned that my late visit at your house should have been productive of so much distress and alarm to your whole family; need I add how much pleasure it would give me were I able to
send

send you any certain intelligence of your young fugitive? Hitherto I have had it in my power to obtain no satisfactory information concerning him; yet I have great hopes of soon being more successful. The last time I went on shore, that is to say, yesterday morning, I was told I had been enquired for repeatedly by a young sailor, who had since had a private conference with our Captain; no one, however, could inform me where he lodged, or what was his name; but by the description given me of his person, I could have no doubt of its being your son.

“ In the evening, when I again went on board, I requested the Captain to tell me who the youth was, he had discoursed with the preceding day, and what his reasons were for enquiring so anxiously after me. He answered that he knew nothing more of him than what his appearance denoted, which was that of a young adventurer recently eloped from his friends; that all his business with him was to request he might be taken on board our vessel in any capacity whatever. ‘ The boy,’ continued he, ‘ looks active and spirited, and I own I felt strongly tempted to secure

him; but not knowing what anxiety I might occasion to his family by such a step, I simply told him I should let him know my determination in a few days; but at that moment could give him no positive answer.'

" I then asked where this interview had taken place, and where they were to meet again? He named one of the principal inns on shore, and thither, at the appointed time, I am to carry the Captain's answer.

" If the youth in question, Madam, should prove to be your son, you may depend upon my exerting all my influence over him in order to induce him to return to you immediately. I will write again the moment I have seen him, to acquaint you with my success.

" I beg to be remembered to Sir Edgar, and the young ladies; and with kindest love to Clarentine, remain,

" Dear Madam,

" With great respect and regard,

" Your Ladyship's most obedient,

" Humble Servant,

" WILLIAM SOMERSET."

After

After reading this letter, it seemed so evident to Lady Delmington that any farther opposition to her son's wishes would but drive him to extremities, and induce him at any risk to engage with some other Captain less scrupulous than Somerset's, that she instantly determined to write again to the latter, granting Frederick full permission to go on board, recommending him to his care, and entreating him to become her agent, and provide for her son every thing necessary for the voyage.

Clarentine wrote a short letter to Somerset at the same time, and both were immediately sent off.

By return of post, Somerset's answer arrived:—

TO LADY DELMINGTON.

DEAR MADAM;

“ The receipt of your Ladyship's last letter gave me inexpressible satisfaction. I had seen your son in the morning, and had ineffectually attempted to reason him from his purposed enterprize; he was immovable in adhering to it, assured me, that if I opposed his admission into my own ship, he would apply to the officers

of some other ; and, in fhort, was unalterably determined, neither to return home nor abandon his original defign. We parted, in confequence of this unavailing contention, mutually difcontented with each other ; but with a promife, however, of meeting again the next day.

“ Your Ladyfhip will be curious to learn how, during all the time that preceded his admiffion on board, he contrived to fupport himfelf to procure a lodging, and other neceffaries. The following is the account I gathered from him upon the fubject.

“ When he left Delmington Houfe, which he fays was at four o’clock in the morning, he carried with him *half-a-crown* in his purfe, two fhirts in his pocket, a gold watch, and a pair of filver buckles ; the watch he fold as well as the buckles, on the fecond day of his elopement ; and, for *both*, got only five guineas. ‘ I knew,’ faid he, ‘ the rogues cheated me, for I had often heard my mother fay the watch, which was the gift of my god-father, was *alone* worth four times that fum : what could I do however ? I wanted the money, and they foon difcovered it ; fo, for
fear

fear they should make a still better bargain with me, and offer me yet less, I was glad to let both watch and buckles go for what they first offered.'

" On his arrival at the port we are now anchored at, he immediately changed his coat and waistcoat for a common sea-boy's jacket and trowsers. The money he brought with him has lasted ever since; though, I believe by this time, it is very nearly exhausted.

" The intelligence your Ladyship's second letter enabled me to communicate to him, when next we met, filled him with the most extravagant delight. He was received the same evening on board, and is, at this moment, writing to his brother at my side.

" Your Ladyship may be perfectly assured, that I shall neglect no means in my power to render the voyage easy and comfortable to him; I entreat you therefore to discard all anxiety on his account, and to believe that the same attention I should pay to a brother of my own, I shall always be happy to shew him. We shall equip him immediately with whatever the Captain may think necessary; and are,

to a man, extremely rejoiced to have gained so spirited and chearful a companion.

“ I have the honour to be,
 “ Your Ladyship’s most obliged,
 “ And very humble Servant,
 “ WILLIAM SOMERSET.”

Enclosed was a letter—

TO SIR EDGAR DELMINGTON, BART.

DEAR EDGAR,

“ I dare not write to my mother, though I long to do it too, to thank her for what Mr. Somerset tells me she says about me in her last letter to him. I suppose you were all famously astonished when you first discovered I was gone? What did our friend *Crab* say upon the subject? I hope she was in a glorious rage! I am sorry I had not time before I went to give her some little amicable token of remembrance!

“ Love to Clarentine and my sisters,
 Take care of our poney, and believe me,
 dear Edgar,

“ Your affectionate brother,
 “ FREDERICK DELMINGTON.”
 “ P. S.,

“ P S.—Mr. Somerfet is very kind to me—I knew he would. Our Captain is a good sort of a man enough.”

This curious epistle, all fears for the safety of the writer being at an end, amused the little family extremely. Edgar immediately answered it, and Harriet and Sophia each wrote a few words in the cover. Lady Delmington the same day sent off a letter filled with the most grateful acknowledgments to young Somerfet, entreating him to transmit to her an exact account of all the expences that would be incurred for her son, and to let her hear from him as often as possible.

The time was now drawing near for Edgar's departure. Mrs. Harrington was to set off the same morning, and might in some measure be said, by the joy her removal occasioned, to allay the concern felt by the whole family on account of the loss of Edgar.

The day before he set out, Clarentine, of late unusually grave and melancholy, felt still more than ever depressed. He had scarcely spoken to her, with any de-

gree of cordiality, for near a month; and the idea of his leaving home in such a temper of mind, distressed her beyond measure. Determined, however, not to make the first advances, she smothered her concern, and struggled to appear easy and contented.

After supper, and when the whole family had left the parlour, Clarentine, while she was undressing Emma, who, that night, on account of her brother's departure, had been allowed to sit up an hour or two later than usual, recollected a bird she had left hanging out in his cage, at the school-room window, and as soon as the child was in bed, hastened thither to take it in.

On opening the door her candle blew out, and she expected to have been left in total darkness; but what was her surprise to find Edgar there before her, with a light he had himself brought standing near a desk arranging some papers!

They both started on perceiving each other; and Clarentine, forgetting her errand, was, for a moment, tempted to turn back; Edgar, however, prevented her, and by asking her in a more friendly accent

cent than she expected, what she came for? brought her to her recollection, and determined her to proceed.

She accordingly went towards the case-ment, opened it, took in the cage, and after hanging it up in its usual place was leaving the room in utter silence, when Edgar again stopped her—

“ Won’t you light your candle, Clarentine,” said he, “ before you go?”

Clarentine turned back, and he brought the light towards her—they then, for the first time looked in each other’s faces, and Edgar saw that her’s was bathed in tears!

All the tenderest emotions of his heart were awakened at this sight; he took her passive hand, and drawing her gently towards him, said in a voice that was kindness itself—

“ Why, my Clarentine, are we no longer the friends we used to be? Why were we going to part with so much coldness?”

“ Alas!” cried Clarentine, “ I ought to ask that of *you*, Edgar!”

“ Well,” cried he, taking the candle from her, “ come back, and let us have a few minutes conversation.”

As^t

As he spoke, he led her towards the table, and they both sat down.

The explanation so long, and so vainly desired by Clarentine, then took place. Edgar communicated to her his fears respecting Frederick Somerset, reminded her of the firmness with which on the night of the ball she had refused to come down till Somerset interfered; asked her how she could, after engaging herself to dance with *him*, stand up with another the whole evening? and, in short, recapitulated frankly and honestly every circumstance that had given him alarm, and besought her, if she could, at once to exculpate herself.

Clarentine flattered herself this would be no difficult task. Her heart was so pure, her intentions so innocent; she was so remote from any wish of concealment, or any suspicion of the real nature of Edgar's jealousy, that, joy to find his late coldness originated not from more serious causes obliterated the remembrance of all his past injustice.

“My dear Edgar,” cried she, “you little know my heart, if you imagine, that when I appeared to give way to Mr. Somerset’s

merſet's ſolicitations with greater readineſs than I did to your's, I meant to ſhew him any marked preference, or regard. I conſider you *both* as my brothers, my beſt friends; but to him, as being my *eldeſt* brother—as being totally beyond the reach of Mrs. Harrington's ill-humour, I more quietly ſubmitted, becauſe I foreſaw leſs reaſon to ſuppoſe he could be reproached for the kindneſs he ſhewed me. Never, therefore, again, dear Edgar, reſent the ſiſterly affection I feel ſo much pleaſure in letting Mr. Somerſet perceive I have for him. He has merited it by ſo many acts of frienſhip, by ſo much benevolence and goodneſs, that I ſhould hate *myſelf*, and by no means have a better opinion of *you*, if you could ſtill love me, were I not at all times, and upon all occaſions, to treat him with the attention and gratitude that are his due."

Edgar, incapable of defining the mixed ſenſation of approbation and envy, excited by this ſpeech, aſhamed to ſuffer the latter to appear, and yet too cruelly oppreſſed to be capable of giving utterance to the former, hung his head in ſilent dejection, aſſented tacitly to the hope ſhe expreſſed
that

that they were now perfectly reconciled; and the next moment suffered her, after bidding him good-night, with all her wonted cordiality, to quit the room, without attempting to detain her.

The next morning, at six o'clock, he set off, leaving Clarentine, guiltless of a thought to his disadvantage, firmly persuaded she had succeeded in eradicating from his breast every shadow of animosity, and consequently disposed again to be the gayest and happiest creature in the house.

Lady Delmington, ignorant of the cause of this sudden alteration, attributed it solely to the departure of Edgar, and fondly flattered herself his late coldness to her had effectually damped an attachment she had begun to observe with so much distrust. Pleased with this idea, though by no means desirous their mutual indifference should amount to absolute dislike, she redoubled all her kindness to Clarentine in secret atonement for the wrong she had done her, in seeking to alienate from her the heart of her son.

Mrs. Harrington rejoicing that, at least for the present, all danger was precluded by the temporary separation of the suspected

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ed lovers, left Delmington House in a far more tranquil state of mind than she had enjoyed during her whole visit. The family saw her depart with pleasure, and all resumed its former serenity and calmness.

C H A P. VIII.

NEAR two years had elapsed, unmarked by any striking incident, and undisturbed by any domestic evil. Lady Delmington resigned to the deprivation of her youngest son, felt all her tenderness increased for the eldest, whose early talents, and many excellencies of heart and understanding, seemed to justify her utmost partiality, and to promise the fullest realization of her most sanguine hopes.

The dissention, however, she had succeeded for a time in exciting between him and Clarentine he had never forgotten, and quick-sighted as to her real motives, had likewise learned, but too well, to understand. He perceived clearly what were
her

her fears, and conscious of their justice, fought by every method in his power to check their progress, and mislead her penetration.

Whenever, in her presence, therefore Clarentine and he were together, he compelled himself to treat her with as much neglect, as when they were alone he evinced attention and kindness; seldom spoke to her; never, when she was absent, spoke of her; and so completely lulled his mother's apprehensions, that she almost began to wonder how she could ever entertain any.

Clarentine, inexperienced and artless, was long before she observed, and when she did observe, utterly incapable of comprehending the reasons of these sudden vicissitudes of temper. One hour all warmth, all animation, he conversed with an ease, a gaiety that delighted her; the next, if his mother appeared, he became negligent and careless, absent when spoken to, guarded in his looks, grave, reserved, and spiritless.

Struck at length, by the singularity of this behaviour, Clarentine one day, half laughing,

laughing, questioned him upon the subject.

“Are you not,” cried she, “the most capricious of human beings, Edgar?—You are never the same two hours together, but in the midst of the most cheerful conversation often assume, from one minute to another, the most distant and astonishing solemnity I ever beheld. What can be the reason?”

“My dearest Clarentine,” answered he, “I do not at present *wish* you to understand the motives of my conduct, innocent and justifiable as they are. This, however, I am anxious you should believe; that I am influenced in what I do neither by *caprice* nor chance, but by reasons the most indispensable. Ask me for no further explanation; but trust to the purity of my intentions, and communicate your surprize upon this subject to no one else.”

Towards the latter end of the autumn Frederick returned to England, and with his friend Somerset, hastened to Delmington House. Their arrival was hailed as a signal for festivity throughout every part of the family; a ball was given on
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the occasion; a quantity of beer distributed among the servants and neighbouring peasantry; and to compleat the general satisfaction, *three entire holydays* granted the children, during which no masters came, no lessons were given, no tasks imposed!

By indulgencies such as these, by a reception the most tender and affectionate, and by every amusement it was in her power to procure him, Lady Delmington flattered herself she should wean the heart of her son from a profession he had, so infinitely against her choice, embraced—attach him once again to his native home, and inspire him with a lasting dislike to his late way of life. But this she soon found it was hopeless to expect. The first three or four days of his return elapsed—the first transports excited by the sight of his family abated, he became restless, discontented and impatient; made eternal comparisons between the languid uniformity of his present situation, and the spirit, bustle, and animation that reigned on board a man of war; protested he knew not how to employ a single hour of his time; hated the *dead-calm* of every thing

thing around him; and longed for nothing so much as to be restored to his ship, his mess-mates, and his *forecastle jokes*.

Far different were the sentiments of young Somerset. Though partial to his profession, because well versed in its duties and persuaded of its utility, though full of courage, jealous of the honour of his country, and zealous in its defence in time of actual service, he was yet not so wholly bigotted to the charms of a sailor's life as to be insensible to the pleasure of a temporary change, or incapable of enjoying the elegancies of polished society. Naturally fond of literature, and guided in his choice of books by taste and discernment, he loved study, and was indefatigable in the search of knowledge. Whoever would join with him in this pursuit, he sought after, and courted; delighted in social conversation; and never experienced such perfect satisfaction, as when reading some interesting work, by the fire-side on a winter evening, with a cheerful family circle around him. The security he then enjoyed recompensed him "for the dangers he had passed;"
and

and as the loud blasts howled without the house and he

“ Sat at the social fire, and happy heard

“ The excluded tempest idly rave along.”*

he hugged himself in his present safety; and grieved for all, who were exposed to their fury.

At the end of a fortnight, to the deep regret of Frederick, and the general concern of the whole family, he was summoned to town by his father, and obliged to terminate his visit. He took an opportunity, however, before he went, of privately interrogating Clarentine.

“ Have you,” said he, “ as much reason to be satisfied with your situation as when I was here last? Does Lady Delmington still continue kind to you? Are her children affectionate? Tell me, my Clarentine; and be not afraid to own to me the truth.”

“ Indeed” said Clarentine, “ I have no cause, since I can but repeat what I have already told you ; that I am perfectly happy ; truly grateful, and desirous of nothing so much as to remain always as I am.”

Then requesting him to wait for her a moment, she went up to her room, and

* Thompson.

brought

brought down the pocket-book, he had two years before given her—

“ There,” cried she, presenting it to him, “ take that back, Mr. Somerfet ; I know not exactly its contents, for I never could bring myself, recollecting for what purpose it was bestowed, to look at it without shuddering ; but that it is of value I have no doubt. Be that as it will, however, I entreat you will take it back. It would be unpardonable in me to retain it now, convinced as I am, I never shall have occasion to put it to the use intended. I trust implicitly in Lady Delmington’s affection, and think I should be a hateful wretch secretly to hoard with suspicious ingratitude the means of quitting her, at the very time she is most generously loading me with favours, and supporting me by her bounty.

“ Dear, and amiable girl !” cried Somerfet, struck with admiration at this disinterested speech—“ such perfect confidence in Lady Delmington does honour to your excellent heart, and will, I hope, be nobly rewarded ! Still, however, retain the pocket-book, if not for the use originally

originally designed, at least, for any other you may like to put it to."

They then separated, and the following day Somerset went up to London.

CHAP. IX.

SOME weeks after, Lady Delmington received a very extraordinary visit from a near neighbour of hers, the Earl of Welwyn, a man of the most respectable character, but of a retired, shy disposition, who, though he had been settled some years in the country, had scarcely visited any other family, or admitted any other guests than herself and her children.

He brought with him his daughter, Lady Julia Leyburne, a very pretty, delicate girl, not yet fifteen. When the first compliments were over, and they had taken their seats, he made known the purport of his visit.

He had a son, he said, who was then at Oxford, in a very declining state of health,

health, owing it was apprehended to the wonderful rapidity of his growth, united to a delicacy of constitution, that rendered it adviseable, according to the opinion of the best physicians, to send him, as the winter was approaching, to a warmer climate. Unwilling, at so early an age, to commit him wholly to his own guidance, and not possessing any connections abroad to whom he could, with implicit confidence, entrust him, his Lordship added, that he was determined to accompany him to Lisbon in person.

“ Now, Madam,” continued he, with a good-humoured smile, “ while I am performing my duty towards *one* of my children, I leave *another*, who is equally dear to me, unprotected, helpless, and inexperienced. She has no mother, no female relations whose habits and way of life I yet wish her to be inured to, no governess I can wholly confide in, but stands there, a poor deserted little being, dependant upon *your* benevolence for that care and attention, her age still demands.”

Lady Delmington looked extremely surprized; his Lordship however, without giving her time to speak, went on—

“ I have witnessed the effects, and long secretly applauded the excellence, of your maternal character. As a wife your conduct was exemplary—as a mother it exceeds all praise. Now whether my admiration will appear to your Ladyship of any value, when you hear to how bold a request it prompts me, is yet to be determined; a higher proof of its sincerity, however, I could not give, and my motive will at all events, with so good a mother, plead my excuse. Your children,” continued he, “ the most lovely, the most promising I ever beheld; your wise system of domestic education; your retired manner of living, all conspire to excite in me the most ardent desire, during my uncertain absence, to intrude my daughter into your family. Could you, Lady Delmington, to oblige an anxious father, could you generously undertake such a charge? Could you, relieving me from the painful necessity of placing her in a school, burden yourself with such an incumbrance a few short months? She is mild, docile, and tractable; has been used to proper controul; is of a very affectionate nature, and would soon learn to love you as her mother,
your

your children as her sisters. What they are taught, I would wish the same masters to continue teaching her ; what rules they are prescribed, I would wish her to follow. Their *school hours*, their *morning tasks*, let her conform to them all. Make her in every respect your own child, and treat her, while she merits it, with the same tenderness a mother feels. Here she stands, look at her well, and let her youth, her innocence, plead for her."

Lady Delmington, won by the characteristic frankness, the paternal solicitude of this speech, found all her rising objections give way to its blunt, but affecting earnestness. She rose up, and ringing the bell, said, " Let me at once, my Lord, put an end to your anxiety on this subject, by assuring you that, feeling myself highly honoured by so distinguished a mark of your good opinion, I most readily accept the precious trust you consign to me, and from this moment look upon your daughter as my established inmate."

" Heaven bless you ! dear Madam," cried the enraptured father, seizing her hand, " you have given me new life, given me happiness unspeakable ! Julia," con-

tinued he, turning to his daughter, “ approach and thank your benevolent protectress.”

The lovely girl timidly advanced, and stammered out her grateful acknowledgements; whilst Lady Delmington, affectionately embracing her, ordered the servant who now entered to call her children.

In a few moments the door opened, and the Miss Delmingtons, Clarentine, and Frederick, whom curiosity brought with them, entered the room.

Lord Welwyn, taking his daughter by the hand, led her towards them—

“ I have brought you,” said he “ my dear young ladies, a new sister, a playmate, whom I hope you will love as much as she is already disposed to love you. Your excellent mother has consented to her admission, and in a few days I shall leave her, fearless and happy, among you.”

The girls, enchanted by this speech, all gathered round their promised companion, with looks of mixed pleasure and surprise; and whilst each attempted to express in her own way the satisfaction that she

she felt, Lady Delmington turned to Lord Welwyn, and said,

“ When may we flatter ourselves, my Lord, you will permit your daughter to come to us ? ”

“ I cannot part with her ” answered he, “ till I set out for Oxford, to join my son, which will not be till towards the end of the week. ”

“ On Friday, or Saturday next, then, ” said Lady Delmington, “ we may expect her ? ”

The last mentioned day being fixed upon, his Lordship soon after, all gratitude and delight, took his leave.

The rapidity with which this arrangement had been made, though upon reflection it appeared to Lady Delmington astonishing, was calculated at the same time to rejoice and flatter her extremely. It evinced in Lord Welwyn such an unbounded reliance in her principles and character—promised such a valuable connection to her children, and elated her with such hopes of patronage for Frederick, that she was led to hail the past hour as one of the most fortunate of her life. All she feared, and the first idea

that started into her mind on hearing the proposal, was, that Lady Julia Leyburne, accustomed from her infancy to so much splendour, and in her father's house to so much affluence, should teach her children to lament their own inferiority, to despise the plain and simple habits they had been brought up in, and to pant after luxuries and indulgencies unfit for the mediocrity of their fortunes. This dread, however, was in some measure removed by the unlimited authority Lord Welwyn had given her over his daughter, an authority which, in case of necessity, she was resolutely determined to exert.

A room, the most cheerful and pleasant in the house, was prepared for the expected visitor, and a bed put up in a light closet next it for her maid. No attention was spared in rendering this apartment convenient—and at the appointed time it was ready to receive its destined inhabitant.

Lord Welwyn when the day arrived brought her himself to the house; sat about a quarter of an hour with Lady Delmington to give the servants time to take her things out of the carriage; then
tenderly

tenderly embracing, and recommending her most anxiously to the whole family, he departed, and pursued his road to Oxford.

The first two days of her removal, Lady Julia, though she appeared perfectly satisfied with her new abode, and extremely thankful for every attention she received, was grave and silent. By degrees, however, her spirits, never very high, regained their usual tone, and if she was not gay, she at least was placid and contented.

Clarentine, who since her explanation with Edgar had been all animation and vivacity—whose disposition, when unclouded by the accidental and temporary distresses inseparable from her situation, was always easy, serene and chearful; Clarentine saw not without extreme surprise in a young person, within a few months, exactly her own age, so much her superior in birth and expectations, and so lavishly endowed by nature with every charm that could attach and please, such a total indifference to those advantages, and such an incapacity to enjoy them with the spirit and gratitude they ought to inspire. Gentle, tender, and diffident, there

was yet a languid supineness about her that rendered her lifeless and insipid. Devoid of that sportive activity, that playful carelessness of temper so natural to youth, she foresaw danger, difficulty, or trouble, in every thing she undertook; hesitated whether to quit her seat, set out on a walk, or run the slightest risk of fatigue; till wearied herself of being solicited, and completely wearisome to every body else—in short, was slow to a degree that was absolutely tormenting in all she did, and quick in nothing but in discovering, or fancying she discovered, coldness in the looks or voice of those she loved. Fears, silent lamentations, sighs, and an air of misery at once the most profound and the most unaccountable, succeeded to these fancied flights; for a time she abandoned herself to the deepest despondency—grieved bitterly over her own fate; and only shook off the gloom that preyed upon her spirits, by efforts the most painful, and struggles the most incessant.

To counterbalance these little foibles, however, which reason and experience it was believed would effectually eradicate, she had many real excellencies, and among
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the rest, her strong attachment, her veneration for her father was the most conspicuous. Next to him, she soon, as he had predicted, learnt to reverence and love Lady Delmington. For her daughters, Harriet in particular, she felt nothing but indifference: they had not anything sufficiently striking in their characters to touch a heart so slow to imbibe affection, though so warm, so sincere, so entirely devoted, when once attached. Great, or very amiable qualities could alone excite her attention—animate her into respect—or surprize her into admiration. Lady Delmington appeared to her to possess the former; she therefore obeyed her with deference, and consulted her with humility: Clarentine, she thought, possessed the latter; she therefore loved, courted, and distinguished her with unbounded partiality: spent the greatest part of her time in her room, or in walking with her over the grounds: wondered at her constant activity, and almost envied her unobtrusive gaiety.

Clarentine on her part, interested by the mild virtues of her new friend, yet pitying the listless indolence that so un-

happily enfeebled those virtues, endeavoured by every art, every effort, to infuse into her mind greater energy and vigour. Neither gentle remonstrances, example nor entreaties were left untried; now gaily, now seriously, she reasoned with her upon her total want of firmness, her inattention and spiritless indifference concerning every thing, that required real application; and at length awakened her to a sensation bordering upon emulation; succeeded by repeated solicitations in prevailing upon her, rather than be always dependant upon others, sometimes to assist herself; and convinced her of the necessity, if she wished to be happy, of employing her time, if not usefully, at least rationally.

Four months spent in daily observing these lessons put in practice by her young and lovely monitress, had a most astonishing effect upon Lady Julia, and almost compleated her reformation. Happier than she had ever been in her life, occupied in acquiring talents, and in obtaining information, her attachment to Clarentine seemed hourly to encrease, her own
improvement

improvement to advance, and her understanding to enlarge. '

C H A P X.

ABOUT this time Frederick Delmington was summoned to Portsmouth again to embark with his friend Somerset. Rejoiced by such a call, though concerned by the affliction it seemed to give his family, half melancholy and half delighted, he bade adieu to his mother and sisters, forgot not to recommend to them his *poney*, and at an early hour sat out on his journey

He was replaced within a week by his brother, whose holidays were now commenced, and whose return was hailed with the usual satisfaction.

Lady Julia had never seen him, and notwithstanding the praises she had heard bestowed on him, almost dreaded his arrival, so infinitely had she been distressed by Frederick's boisterous gaiety, and so

greatly did she apprehend a repetition of the same scenes.

His first appearance however instantly dispelled all her fears, and left her only sensible to feelings of admiration and surprise.

Sir Edgar Delmington, now turned of nineteen, tall, manly, and elegant, united to a face, glowing with sensibility and good-humour, an ease and even dignity of manners and address, rarely, at any age, to be excelled. Conscious of no superiority, or if conscious, diligent in concealing it, his conversation was as pleasing as his form; animated without turbulence, sensible without conceit, and gentle without effeminacy.

The little graceful figure of Lady Julia, her soft and interesting countenance, seemed, from the moment of his introduction to her, to charm him extremely. He congratulated his mother upon having obtained such an acquisition to her family, and evidently addressed himself more willingly, and also more frequently to her, than to a mere stranger, he had ever been known to do before.

At dinner, however, the object of his
attention

attention was wholly changed. Clarentine, who when he arrived was out with Emma, then first entered the room, her cheeks tinged with the united glow of exercise and pleasure, her fine eyes sparkling with undissimulated joy, and her ready hand eagerly extended to welcome home with smiles of cordial satisfaction her long absent favorite. Fortunately for Edgar, Lady Delmington, not yet descended into the dining-parlour, escaped being witness to their first meeting; had she beheld it, his countenance would infallibly have betrayed him, since, most evidently imprinted on it, for a moment, were all the affectionate emotions of his heart, the transport with which he again surveyed her, and the admiration with which he viewed her improvement in beauty and in stature.

The caution, however, he had observed when at home before, he still after this interview resolutely, and as if upon system adhered to. The presence of Lady Julia facilitated to him the performance of this task, as she and Clarentine were inseparable companions, and therefore effectually relieved him from all apprehension of

ever being surprized a moment by his mother alone with the latter.

The walks, the amusements, the conversations of the two young friends now became more pleasing than ever: Edgar was continually of their parties; divided his attention equally between them, and to all appearance divided likewise his regard.

A melancholy event occurred about this time, which heightened the interest felt by the whole family for their amiable inmate. Accounts arrived from Lord Welwyn of the death of his son at Naples, and Julia, tenderly attached to her brother, heard the intelligence, though communicated in the most cautious manner, with a degree of affliction, that almost overwhelmed her.

Lady Delmington, condemning, as irrational, an excess of sorrow she yet could not but compassionate; and believing that when this first paroxysm of grief was past, the helpless little sufferer would gladly seek a refuge from her own melancholy thoughts in the sympathy of her friends, forbore aggravating her distress, by austere remonstrances, or an unfeeling

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ing exertion of her authority, and patiently awaited the moment when resignation would take the place of despair, and her heart would be open to the soothing of kindness, and the voice of consolation.

Clarentine, who in sensibility was Lady Julia's equal, but in understanding infinitely her superior, was too generous to take offence at being for some days, in common with the rest of the family, excluded her apartment; and too affectionate, though in the same circumstances certain she should have shewn more fortitude, to mingle any reproaches with the tears and caresses that attended their first meeting.

A sadness, a dejection she attempted not even to conquer or conceal, now took entire possession of Lady Julia's mind. She fatigued no one with complaints, but her countenance lost all traces of that animation she had been so long acquiring; cheerless, silent, and incapable of exerting the slightest degree of self-controul, she wandered, as Lady Delmington termed it, with *restless inactivity* about the house, a desolate, unfocial being, unfit for conversation, and unwilling to be amused.

Clarentine

Clarentine at length, discouraged from making any further efforts to remove her depression, reluctantly gave up the attempt; watched her with looks of pity wherever she went, but never offered to follow her, and never intruded upon her retirement.

It was now happy for Edgar, that the term of his absence from Eton was again nearly expired. Clarentine left to herself, or only sitting with Emma, was a far more dangerous object, than Clarentine constantly attended by a friend so assiduous as Lady Julia. He dreaded his own want of resolution; feared to betray the emotions of his heart, and living in perpetual restraint, blessed the hour that once more tore him from her.

This was to be the last time of his going to Eton, from whence on the next vacation he was to be entered at Oxford.

Lord Welwyn, in less than six weeks after the news arrived of his son's death, came back to England himself. The first interview between him and Lady Julia was truly affecting, though the father in his grief preserved a manly composure, a
firmness,

firmness, very unlike the boundless sorrow of his weeping daughter.

Desirous of taking her home immediately, yet anxious to spare her the pain of too abrupt a separation from her late companions, he drew her aside, and asked *which* of the Miss Delmington's she most wished to invite with her to Welwyn park?

Julia, gratefully sensible of this kindness, immediately answered—

“ Though I have seemed for some time to neglect and shun her ; and though she has cause perhaps to accuse me of want of affection—yet, if I may make a choice, Clarentine, Lady Delmington's niece, is the one I should fix upon in preference to any of her cousins.”

“ Enough, my Julia,” said her father, “ before we go, I will make the proposal.”

Accordingly, after dining and spending the greatest part of the evening with Lady Delmington, having ordered his horses to be put to, he said—

“ The longer your Ladyship knows me, the more reason you will have, I fear, to accuse me of encroaching upon your indulgence. My daughter, for near three months

months, habituated to the society of young people of her own age, who, without any other company, have it always in their power to form an agreeable and chearful family circle among themselves, will feel most painfully, I have no doubt, the hardship of a separation, so sudden and so entire, as that she is now about to suffer. The solitude and gloom of a large and almost uninhabited mansion, to her in the present disposition of her mind, must appear dreadful. Might I then, dearest Madam, solicit for her the consolation of having with her, at least during the first week or two of her removal, one of your young folks as a companion? I ask not for either of your daughters, since it might be inconvenient or disagreeable to you to part with them; but spare me, for the short time I mention, your charming little niece. She looks the picture of innocence, artlessness, and good-humour. Her society will by degrees reconcile Julia to her change of abode, and teach her, perhaps, to give less indulgence to her own melancholy reflections."

Lady Delmington, fully sensible of the advantages Clarentine might derive from
this

this visit, hesitated not a moment, but instantly sent to bid her prepare for her departure. Julia herself entreated to be the bearer of the message, and at the head of the stairs, meeting Clarentine coming down with little Emma, she stopped her, and affectionately taking her hand, said—

“Do you still love me enough, dear Clarentine, to wish to oblige me?”

“Do I?” cried Clarentine, earnestly; “can you doubt it?”

Lady Julia then made her acquainted with what had just passed, and begged her to hasten back to her room to pack up her cloaths; at the same time calling for her own maid to assist her.

In a quarter of an hour Clarentine was ready; the carriage came to the door, and Lord Welwyn, penetrated with the deepest gratitude towards Lady Delmington, took leave of her and her daughters, and departed with his young companions.

Welwyn park was about seven miles from Delmington House, and before the day shut in, the carriage drove through the great iron gates that led up to the house. Clarentine had yet never seen it; never travelled so far in her life! she
gazed

gazed around her with astonishment and admiration! the picturesque and extensive park they had driven through, the stately magnificence of the building, the elegance of the decorations within, and the luxuriance of the prospect without, all contributed to enchant and amaze her!

“ Good Heaven!” cried she, addressing Lady Julia, “ how unlike this superb house is, to the old and gloomy habitation we have just left! How light, spacious, and lofty are these rooms! How beautiful those immense mirrors! How vivid the glow of these pictures! Oh, what a paradise you have brought me to!”

Lady Julia, surprised, yet pleased at the warmth of her friend’s admiration, smiled, and taking her by the hand, conducted her to the upper part of the house to shew her the room she was to sleep in.

“ This,” said she, throwing open the door of a large bed-chamber, after ascending a noble stair-case, “ is my room; if you like to share it with me, dear Clarentine, you know how happy you will make me; there is one beyond it, however, equally pleasant, which, if you prefer,
shall

shall be immediately prepared for you. Will you come and look at it?"

"O no;" cried Clarentine, shrinking back, "let me sleep with you in this. I, who have been used to so small a room, and that too, in partnership with my little Emma, should feel quite deserted and comfortless by myself in so large a one as this."

"Then," said Julia, turning back, "we will go no further. Tea will be ready by this time; shall we go down?"

Clarentine consented, and they again joined Lord Welwyn.

In the course of the evening, as his Lordship never left the room, and conversed freely and kindly with his young guest; he gave her an opportunity, by starting the subject himself, to descant warmly in praise of the family she lived with. At last, Frederick was mentioned, and Lord Welwyn, but imperfectly acquainted with the particulars of his flight, drew from Clarentine a more detailed account of it! When she paused—

"In what capacity," said his Lordship, smiling, "is this enterprizing youth now gone out?"

"In

“ In that of midshipman, I believe, my Lord,” answered Clarentine.

“ And what is your friend Somerset’s rank ?”

“ That, I understand, of lieutenant, my Lord. He has hopes of promotion on his return home.”

Lord Welwyn then changed the subject.

Clarentine, accustomed to rise almost the first in the house at Delmington, was up and dressed, the morning after her arrival, before six o’clock. Lady Julia was still asleep, and Clarentine, neither perfectly knowing her way about the house, nor being assured that in going down she might not disturb Lord Welwyn, seated herself at a window in the next room with her drawing materials, till the servants arose, when she determined to find her way out, and wander into the park.

In less than an hour she heard the shutters below stairs unbarred, and, on looking out, saw the gardener and his assistants already at work. This gave her courage, and she stepped softly down.

At the foot of the stairs, she applied to a maid-servant, who was crossing the hall,
for

for the key of the house door. The woman said it had been unlocked some time. Clarentine waited for no more; but, light and active, sprung forward, and too eager to consider which way she should go, guided her steps as chance directed, towards a beautiful and flourishing plantation to the left of the house.

It was now the beginning of June; the morning was mild, serene, and unclouded. Every shrub was in the fullest bloom—every leaf spangled with dew—the air, soft and pure as Clarentine's own heart, gladdened and refreshed her, and infused into her innocent mind the warmest sentiments of gratitude and devotion!

As she pursued her walk, she came to a little winding path, that conducted her at length to the palings of the park next the road side. There was a gate at no great distance, which she observed was open; she went towards it; and saw a venerable old man, who was Lord Welwyn's butler, coming out of a miserable cottage on the opposite side of the road, immediately fronting the gate. He seemed surprised when he perceived her; but passed

passed her without speaking, and by the same path which had guided her thither, walked back to the house.

Clarentine, after he was gone, stood some time motionless at the gate, contemplating with sorrowing eyes the wretched habitation before her. If now, on one of the finest days in summer, surrounded with verdure, cheered by the bright rays of a glowing sun—if *now*, it looked so comfortless and forlorn, what, though Clarentine sighing, must be its aspect, when the bleak winds of winter, the chilling rains, and foggy atmosphere of a December day, penetrate through its decayed thatch, and damp and moulder its thin tottering walls!

Well might she then, in the words of Shakespear, have exclaimed—

“ Poor naked wretches, who so’er you are,
 “ That bide the pelting of the pitiless storm!
 “ How shall your houseless heads, and unfed sides,
 “ Your loop’d and window’d raggedness, defend you
 “ From seasons such as these?
 “ ———— Take physic, pomp;
 “ Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
 “ Then wilt thou shake thy superfluous to them,
 “ And shew the Heavens more just.”

“ Can

“Can it be possible,” thought she, “that Lord Welwyn, a good, a benevolent, and humane man, possessing so much power, and blest with such affluence, should suffer, at his *very gate*, an abode like this—so desolate, so dreary, to fall into ruin, merely from a cruel indifference to the distress of its inhabitants?”

Whilst she was engaged in these reflections, a young woman of a very delicate appearance, slim, perfectly well-formed, and dressed in a light-coloured cotton gown, without any thing upon her head but a band of muslin, carelessly tied round her hair, came out of the cottage, with a low wooden stool in her hand, and an embroidering frame under her arm. She placed the stool in the shade before the door; sat down, and taking the frame upon her knees, began to work with great alacrity; at the same moment, singing with a gay and chearful countenance a well-known French air, Clarentine remembered to have heard William Somersét, in detached parts, often hum about the house.

In a few minutes, a very pretty little girl, of about six years old, followed by a gentleman in a shabby uniform, likewise

appeared at the door. The trees that surrounded Clarentine prevented her being perceived, yet allowed her plainly to distinguish every thing that passed. She heard the gentleman, after standing some time before the cottage, looking at the unclouded sky with admiration, turn to his industrious companion, and say to her in French—

“ Ma bonne amie, voulez-vous que je vous lise quelque chose pendant que vous travaillez ? ”

“ Oui, je le veut bien ; ” answered she, “ allez chercher les *Lettres Péruviennes* ; elles sont sur ma table. ” *

In an instant the book was brought. The officer threw himself down upon the grass by the side of the young foreigner, and began reading aloud ; whilst the child, leaning against its mother’s shoulder, stood quietly watching the progress of her work.

Clarentine beheld this interesting scene with the tenderest concern and pity. She

* “ My good friend, shall I read to you whilst you work ? ”

“ Yes, do ; bring hither the *Péruvian Letters* ; they are upon my table. ”

had heard much of the disastrous effects of the late French Revolution; knew to what direful lengths the cruelty of its promoters had extended; and had often sighed with compassion at the dreadful recital of those calamities many of its innocent victims had suffered, even at the beginning of the disturbances. This was the first time, however, that in her peaceful retirement any of the actual sufferers themselves had appeared; and the impression made upon her by such a sight was therefore proportioned to its novelty. Who the objects were, then before her, it was impossible to guess; but from their language and manners, it was evident they were people of education and refinement. Clarentine longed to speak to them, to question them, but had not courage; and after remaining to observe them till she dared remain no longer, turned away with reluctance, and walked slowly home.

On entering the house she was informed that Lady Julia was waiting breakfast for her; but that my Lord had already finished his, and was gone out on horseback. Eager to communicate the discovery of the morning, she hastened into the break-

fast room, where, alone at an open window, she found Lady Julia reading.

Clarentine immediately began her relation, and gave so animated, yet faithful a detail of all she had seen, that Lady Julia expressed the utmost impatience to hear from the butler what further particulars he might have to recount. Accordingly, she rang the bell and desired he might be called; but was told he had been out the greatest part of the morning, and had not left word whither he was gone.

“Why then, Clarentine,” cried Lady Julia, rising as she spoke with uncommon alacrity, “we will walk down to the cottage ourselves, and make acquaintance with these poor foreigners this very morning. Shall you have courage enough when there are *two* of us to venture to speak?”

Clarentine, with great readiness, answered in the affirmative; and Lady Julia, tying on her hat, took her friend under the arm, and sallied forth without delay.

On their arrival at the little gate opposite the cottage, they perceived that the spot where Clarentine had first discovered the strangers was deserted. The sun,
which

which had now risen to a considerable height, had driven them in; and the two friends, therefore, after crossing the road, were obliged to summon all their resolution, and knock at the cottage door for admittance.

A little girl, about a year older than the one Clarentine had seen in the morning, immediately opened it. The sight of two such entire strangers filled her with dismay. She almost screamed the instant she beheld them, and ran away with a swiftness which nothing but terror could have lent her.

Upon this, the young female, whom Clarentine supposed to be her mother, started from her seat and sprung forward, anxiously enquiring what was the matter? The unexpected appearance of Lady Julia and Clarentine nearly astonished her as much as it had alarmed the child. She blushed—curtsied very politely—invited them to walk in; and, when they were seated, asked in a hesitating voice, to what cause she was to attribute the honour of such a visit?

Lady Julia, with a delicacy, a cautious fear of offending, that added to the wonted

sweetness of her countenance, and gave to it an expression of benevolence the most angelic, apologized for the abruptness with which she had ventured to introduce herself; beseeching the young stranger not to impute it to any motives of impertinent curiosity, but solely to the earnest desire she felt, as being her most immediate neighbour, to offer her such comforts or assistance, as the inconvenience of her present situation might render necessary

The young stranger, penetrated with gratitude for an attention so flattering and unexpected, bowed her thanks, and sighing deep, said, pointing to her children—

“ For myself, dear Madam, I require little; *my* wants, I thank Heaven! I have learnt to contract within a very narrow compass; but whilst my children, thus helpless and dependent, lean wholly upon me for support, I feel myself bound to embrace with eagerness any offer which benevolence may dictate towards alleviating their necessities.”

Clarentine, much affected by this speech, touched by the patient humility of the meek

meek sufferer, and the look of anguish with which she regarded her infants whilst acknowledging their distress; now asked whether she had any other children than the two sweet girls then present?

“ I have one more,” answered the stranger, “ a boy in arms, who is at this time asleep in the next room. I have a brother-in-law with me likewise: but my husband is with General ——’s army, as well as most of my other connections and friends.”

“ May we ask, Madam,” said Lady Julia, “ how long you have been in this part of the country?”—

“ About ten days. I was led hither by the hope of finding the necessaries of life cheaper than in the capital; and also with a view of benefit to my brother, who is much out of health, and with whom the air of London disagreed extremely.”

“ I fear you have yet made no acquaintance here?”

“ Helas! Mademoiselle,” said the stranger, mournfully—“ Est ce dans une position comme le mienne qu’on fait des con-

noifances? Je sens bien que le malheur n'est pas en droit de ſi attendre!"*

"I am grieved to hear you think ſo;" —cried Lady Julia—"We had flattered ourſelves it might have been in our power to have inſpired you with better hopes; ſince it is our moſt ardent wiſh to ſerve you, and to obtain your confidence and good opinion."—

The unhappy foreigner, overcome by the kindneſs of this ſpeech, burſt into tears, and preſſing Lady Julia's hand to her boſom with a look of ſenſibility the moſt impaſſioned, ſobbed out, in broken, and ſcarce intelligible ſentences, the grateful effuſions of her heart—

"Ange du ciel!" exclaimed ſhe—
 "Quel être bienfaifant et généreux, a pu vous conduire dans cette triſte demeure? Si jeune encore, eſt-il poſſible qu'on puiſſe avoir autant de prévenance, de bonté, de delicateſſe? Ah! dite moi —qui êtes-vous? d'où venez vous?"†

"My

* "Alas! Madam, is it in ſuch a ſituation as mine I can hope to form any new acquaintance? I am ſenſible it is not miſfortune that can give me a right to expect it!"

† "Angel of Heaven! What being, beneficent, and good, can have conducted you to this wretched abode?

Is

“ My name,” answered Lady Julia, “ is Leyburne. I live at the great house, (chateau) you see yonder behind that plantation. Who *you* are, I venture not to enquire: but of this be assured—you have a friend in me the most sincere, the most deeply interested in all your concerns.”

“ Your name is Leyburne?” cried the young stranger with a look of surprise—
“ You live at the great house I have so often beheld with a wish to know its owners? Ah! you have then beneath your roof an inhabitant, whose virtues, whose excellence you dream not of! Bertrand, an old domestic in your family, who, in happier times served my father abroad, in grateful remembrance of what he owed his former master, has succoured, assisted, and befriended me and mine, from the hour of our arrival, with a zeal and activity that does honour to his heart! He brings me daily such little presents as his circumstances and situation will permit—provides proper nourishment for my chil-

Is it possible that, young as you are, you should already possess so much delicacy, so much tenderness? Ah! tell me, who are you? Whence do you come?”

dren—loves them, cherishes them,—and in short, has hitherto been our only support and comforter!”

Lady Julia and Clarentine during this recital felt their eyes fill with tears. They both in the same breath exclaimed, the instant the stranger paused—

“Worthy, excellent old Bertrand! How I shall love him from this moment! But tell me, dear Madam,” continued Lady Julia, “did he ever talk to you of my father?—of me?”

“Yes, often. He represented you to me, such as I find you—amiable, gentle, kind! And your father, he said, was the best, the first of human beings!”

“Ah! believe me,” cried Lady Julia, with warmth, “when you know him, when you see him, you will find all that Bertrand said was nothing more than strict justice!”

She then rose to take leave, when the young foreigner eagerly seizing her hand, and that of Clarentine, who at the same moment approached her, joined them in her own, and with the most affecting earnestness exclaimed—

“Adieu,

“ Adieu, aimables et douces amies! Soyez toujours unies, toujours compagnes! et fasse le ciel, que possédant les mêmes vertus, vous jouissiez du même bonheur!”*

Unable to speak, the two friends could only press with silent emotion the hand that held theirs, and hurry out of the cottage.

C H A P X I.

LADY Julia's first care on entering the house was to send for the old butler. He came the instant he was summoned, anxious to apologize for his absence in the morning, and to learn how he could be useful to his young mistress.

Lady Julia, into whom the benevolent sensations awakened by all that had passed, seemed to have infused a spirit, an energy unknown to her before, ran to him the

* “ Adieu, sweet, and amiable friends! May you always love, always accompany each other! And may it pleased Heaven that, possessing the same virtues, you may enjoy the same felicity.”

moment he appeared, and taking his hand, said,

“ My kind, and honest Bertrand! you must teach me to become good, and generous like you! I have heard *such* stories of you as have won my very heart! Oh! why did I not sooner hear how I might assist you in all you did?”—

Bertrand, who although he had lived 15 years in England, possessed every merit to a higher degree of perfection than that of talking or even understanding the language of the country, looked aghast at this speech, and with an air of astonishment the most profound, said, in a mixed dialect, half French, half English—

“ What, *pour l'amour de Dieu!* you talk about, my dear young Lady? I not *comprend* von vord dat you say!”

Lady Julia then, in French, explained to him more methodically her meaning; told him where she had been; what she had heard concerning him; and finally besought him to inform her of all the particulars he was acquainted with relating to her new friend.

“ *Ab! Pardi!* I know vat you say ver vell now!” cried the delighted Bertrand,
recovering

recovering from his late amazement—
 “ You talk of von poor lady at the *chaudière*? *Bon!* I understand ver vell. *Qu’en faut il dire?*”*

“ Nay, Bertrand,” answered Lady Julia—“ You know best what you can say of her! You are acquainted with her name and family, are you not? And you likewise must have heard her reasons for coming to England.”

“ *Surement*, I have heard them! Ah! poor lady! I knew her in her own country, when she was *pas plus haute que mon ponce*.* O, she was pretty, pretty! and so good! Her father he was von *grand Seigneur*, and he had but this child—*c’est-à-dire*, but this von alive. *Eh bien*, as he was always at Versailles, at the Court, he did marry her to von great man also, M. le Comte d’Arzele, who was a *vieux papa* compared to her, for she was but fifteen, and he was forty. *Mais Dame!* *malgre* that, she did make von ver good wife—At least, so I always heard, for I left Paris when she was only ten years old. *Malheureusement* when *la pauvre France* was

* “ What must I tell you about her?”

† “ No higher than my hand.”

turned

turned *sans dessus dessous*, her father, *mon bon vieux maitre*, was in high favour at the court, and *Helas!* died, it was said, of *grief*; at the beginning of the horrors! His poor daughter then, with her children, got over to England; her husband was with the army, her *beau-frere* *se mourant de consomption*;* *enfin* every thing went so bad, that after staying two or three months in London, *n'ayant presque pas le sous*, she came down here, where, *un beau matin*, about a week ago I found her out in that miserable *cabane!*"

Here Bertrand paused, shrugged his shoulders with a most piteous look, heaved a deep sigh, and then proceeded thus—

"Mi lor was not come home, when I did first discover her; *ainsi* I could do but little towards shewing my gratitude to the daughter of my late master: but now dat he is here, and dat you, my good ladi Julie have seen her, I hope her situation will be no longer so *triste*. I did mean this morning to have told all her story to my master; but before I got back from the cottage he was gone out; and so, *il faut garder cela pour une autre fois.*"†

* "Her brother-in-law dying of a consumption."

† "I must reserve it for another time."

"But

“ But tell me, my good Bertrand,” cried Clarentine “ how comes it about, that this unfortunate Madame d’Arzele, whose fate so justly deserves compassion, should, this very morning, soon after you passed me at the park gate, be singing and talking with a cheerfulness that was quite astonishing ?”

“ Dame ! c’est qu’elle est naturellement vive, enjoucé, folâtre ! un rien la fait pleurer, un rien le fait rire. Voiez donc ? Ce n’est pas avec un tel caractère qu’on devient sombre et triste tout de suite ; aussi, soutient-elle ses chagrins avec un courage vraiment étonnant ; travaillant toujours, brodant, faisant de la dentelle — enfin de tout — et chantant, causant, badinant tant qu’elle peut.”*

At that moment the entrance of Lord Welwyn put an end to the subject. Ber-

* “ Ah, truly ! that is because she is naturally spirited, playful, and lively ; a mere trifle makes her cry, a trifle makes her laugh ! You may well believe therefore, that with such a disposition, it is not all at once that she can become gloomy and desponding. The fortitude with which she has borne her sorrows has been truly admirable. She works continually ; embroiders, makes lace, in short, does any thing ! and laughs and sings whenever she can.

trand immediately withdrew; but not before he had recommended to Lady Julia by a significant glance, the cause of his ill-fated mistress.

Meanwhile Lord Welwyn, whose mind seemed to be as much preoccupied as was that of his daughter, seated himself near the window, and after a few moments silence, said,

“ I have been engaged in conversation this morning with a person whose discourse has left such an impression of melancholy on my mind, that I feel myself quite oppressed, and saddened.”

“ Who then, my Lord,” said Lady Julia, “ was this person ?”

“ His name,” answered her father, “ I did not hear; he was a young Frenchman however, and an Emigrant. I met him walking slowly by the road side, in a narrow lane at the distance of about two miles from hence; he stopped to let my horse go by, and as I passed, looked up at me, and slightly touched his hat. Struck by the dejection and languor visible in his countenance, and by a certain air of distinction observable about him, notwithstanding the meanness of his dress,

dress, I returned his bow, and reining in my horse, said something about the fineness of the day, and asked him whether he had walked far that morning? He answered me in French, with great politeness, apologizing for not being able to understand me. I then addressed him in his own language; and, to be short, we soon entered into closer conversation, during the course of which, I dismounted and sent home the groom with my horse, that I might more conveniently pursue a discourse, which now began to interest me most deeply. What he said of himself was slight; he seemed shy of communicating his own affairs; but gave me, in answer to my interrogatories such an account of many of the recent transactions abroad, to which he had unhappily been witness, as made my blood run cold. I understand he resides very near us, with his sister-in-law, and her children; and I have given him a pressing invitation to come and see me. His manners are well-bred, but plain, and unaffected; his language perfectly correct; and his countenance sensible, intelligent, and extremely pleasing."

Lady

Lady Julia, delighted with this account, and not questioning but it related to the officer Clarentine had seen at the cottage, now began her history, omitting none of the circumstances which she thought most likely to interest her father; and concluding by an earnest petition for leave to look out immediately in the neighbourhood for a more convenient habitation for Madame d'Arzele, and her unfortunate little family.

Lord Welwyn heard her with the profoundest attention, and the most evident satisfaction; applauded her benevolent intentions, and readily promised to assist her liberally in their execution.

Accordingly, the carriage was ordered, and the instant dinner was over Lady Julia, her Governess, and Clarentine, set out on their interesting research.

It had been agreed by the two friends, that a house half-way between Welwyn park and Delmington would, on every account, be preferable as to situation and vicinity, to any other. They therefore gave proper orders to the postilion, and proceeded gently forward; gazing with envy at every neat or chearful habitation.

tation they passed, and forming plans of future happiness and comfort for their amiable friend.

At the end of a drive of near four miles, they came to a little village, beautifully situated at the foot of a hill which commanded one of the finest views in nature. Here Lady Julia and her companions stopped; and, whilst the former sent the servant who had attended them to enquire of some of the inhabitants whether there were any houses near there to be let, got out and walked, ordering the postilion to follow them at a distance.

In a few minutes the servant returned to inform his lady that, about a quarter of a mile further up the hill there was a small house then unoccupied, which the people he had questioned believed was either to be let or sold. Thither accordingly they immediately drove, and soon came to one of the most romantic fairy dwellings imagination can conceive! It was situated near a little gothic church so entirely surrounded and concealed by trees, that, at any distance, its antique spire alone was to be seen. Before the door was a green slope, shaded by thick
branching

branching elms, and encircled by a gravel walk whose borders were planted with flowering shrubs. Behind it was a neat, rustic garden, enclosed by a high hedge, and abundantly supplied with all the common fruit-trees and vegetables that the climate affords. The prospect from the front windows particularly was enchanting; the furniture in all the rooms clean and good, and, in short, the whole habitation remarkable for its cheerfulness, order, and perfect tranquillity.

Lady Julia, transported with delight, could with difficulty contain her raptures, even before the man who was deputed to conduct them. She acquired sufficient *sang-froid* at last, however, to ask the necessary and usual questions concerning rent, taxes, &c. and then, telling him she would send a person the next day to make some final agreement with him, she reluctantly got into the chaise and drove away.

Nothing could equal the gaiety and animation with which she made the journey home. Benevolence, that purest of all sensations, warms, invigorates, expands the coldest heart! It gives joy
and

and happiness of the most exquisite nature; adds lustre to the eye of youth, bloom to the cheek, smiles of gladness to the countenance; and diffuses serenity, internal satisfaction, and content wherever it takes root!"

Lord Welwyn welcomed the fair wanderers, with looks of the most cordial affection; congratulated them upon the success of their expedition; and promised to ride over himself the next morning in order to adjust all pecuniary matters with the proprietors of the house, previous to carrying its destined tenants to survey it.

This point settled, Lady Julia, indefatigable and zealous, sent for the house-keeper to her own room, to consult with her about the domestics, with which it would be proper to furnish the new establishment. After a long conference it was agreed, that one maid would be all that at present could be required, as Madame d'Arzele, according to Bertrand's account, had brought a *Femme-de-Chambre* with her from France, who had followed her to the cottage. This additional servant the house-keeper promised

mised to procure: and Lady Julia undertook to pay.

Clarentine, who in all these arrangements took the strongest interest; who rejoiced to behold her friend thus active in the cause of humanity; and who observed her with wonder and delight, whilst silently planning, or diligently executing fresh acts of kindness; Clarentine, the instant they retired to their room for the night, threw her arms around her, and embracing her tenderly—

“O my dearest Lady Julia!” exclaimed she, “how happy you must at this moment feel! What pleasure must the recollection of such a day so spent afford you!”

“Ah! believe me, my Clarentine,” answered Lady Julia affectionately, “the idea of having merited your praise constitutes the sweetest portion of my felicity! My father too, with what gentleness did he speak to, what kindness look at his happy Julia this whole evening! Oh Clarentine, support, encourage me in the wish of doing good, that I may long continue to deserve two blessings so precious to my heart, as the approbation of such a father, the love of such a friend!”

A few days now sufficed to conclude every preparation necessary to be made, before Madame d'Arzele could be put in possession of her charming little abode. Lady Julia, anxious to procure her the additional gratification of surprize as well as comfort, resolutely preserved the strictest silence upon the subject, although she saw her every day, and every day gave her fresh instances of an attachment the most flattering and sincere, till the impatiently expected moment arrived, when, all things being in readiness, she attended her herself, with her friend Clarentine, to the house.

Madame d'Arzele, believing, according to the account she had heard, that this little mansion belonged to Lord Welwyn, and had merely been fitted up during the summer months to receive a friend he expected from London, appeared enchanted with it, but paid infinitely less attention to the charms of its situation than she would have done, had she been informed of the real truth.

After walking over the garden, visiting the different rooms, and tasting some of
the

the best fruit the former afforded, Madame d'Arzele, somewhat impatient at so long an absence from her little family, gently reminded Lady Julia of the lateness of the hour—

“ My dear Madam,” said the latter smiling, “ you must not grow weary of this place yet, for we mean to dine and spend the day here.”

“ Spend the day here?” repeated Madame d'Arzele with a look of consternation—“ Et mes pauvres enfans—que deviendront-ils si longtems sans leur mere ?”*

“ Vous enfans, Madame,” answered Lady Julia, enjoying her perplexity—“ arriveront dans un moment, et dîneront ici avec nous.”†

Madame d'Arzele, more and more surprized, now gazed by turns at Lady Julia, and Clarentine, with looks of the most earnest curiosity ; their countenances however, though beaming with the purest delight, told her nothing, yet encreased

* “ And what, during so long an absence from their mother, will become of my poor children ?”

† “ Your children, Madam, will arrive in a moment, they are to dine here with us.”

her

her wish to be informed. At length, therefore, taking Lady Julia's hand, and attentively fixing her eyes on her's—

“Tell me, tell me,” she cried, “what this mysterious silence, these significant looks, this inexplicable delay, tell me what it all means!”

Lady Julia, too generous to keep her longer in suspense, now threw her arms round her, and embracing her affectionately, answered with much emotion: “It means, dearest Madam, that if the situation suit you, and you can pardon a friend for making such an offer, this house, and every thing it contains—is yours!”

Who can describe the raptures and amazement of the delighted Foreigner? She hung round her lovely benefactress with sensations of gratitude too fervent to be uttered; wept upon her shoulder; called her by every endearing epithet that the most ardent gratitude could dictate; and then, suddenly raising her head, and listening attentively a moment, she sprung to the window exclaiming—“Ah Dieu! voici mes enfans.”* and quicker than

* “Oh Heavens! here are my children.

lightning, flew down stairs to meet and welcome them.

In a short time, the children, attended by their French maid, appeared. The two eldest, who had, at length, familiarized themselves to the sight of Lady Julia and her friend, ran to the former the moment they beheld her, to thank her for the charming ride they had had, and to tell her their uncle was coming immediately with Lord Welwyn, who had promised that they should be allowed to dine there—

At these words, their mother seating herself, and calling them both to her, threw an arm round each, and said—

“ Eugenie, Pauline—Regardez tout-ce-qui vous entoure—cette charmante maison, ce beau jardin, ce coup d’œil délicieux !—Eh bien, voiez apresant votre jeune et genereuse bienfaitrice ! C’est elle qui vous comble de tout ces dons—vous accorde tant de bonheur a la fois—vous remets en possession de tout ce que vous appercevez ? Que ferez vous, O mes chers enfans pour meriter tant de bienfaits, pour exprimer la reconnoissance que doit vous inspirer un excès de bonté si touchant !

si touchant ! Ah ! tombez a ses pieds, et remerciez-la pour vous, et votre heureuse mere !”*

As she uttered this injunction, the tears, which she vainly had endeavoured to disperse, forced their way in torrents down her cheeks, and compelled her to pause. The children, alarmed at this sight, and but imperfectly comprehending the tenour of her speech to them, looked fearfully at Lady Julia and at Clarentine, as if to penetrate the cause of their mother’s apparent grief; and then throwing themselves into her arms, sought by their innocent carresses to sooth and calm her agitation.

In the midst of this scene, Lord Welwyn, and Madame d’Arzele’s brother-in-

* Eugenie, Pauline—Look at every thing that surrounds you—this charming house, that delightful garden, that enchanting prospect ! Look now at your young and generous benefactress ! It is she who enriches you with so many gifts, provides for you so many blessings, and puts you in possession of every thing you behold ? What, oh my dearest children ! can you do to merit such liberality ? How express the gratitude you ought to feel for an excess of kindness so affecting ? Oh ! run to her, and kneeling, thank her for yourselves, and for your happy mother !”

law, the Chevalier de Valcour, arrived. For some time she was incapable of speaking to them, but by degrees her emotion subsiding, she regained all her wonted cheerfulness and vivacity; ran over her new habitation to shew it to the Chevalier, with the same alacrity as if she had not visited it before; played with her children; embraced her two friends; conversed with Lord Welwyn; and till the hour of separation drew near, was in one perpetual transport of wild joy and enthusiastic gratitude!

Lady Julia, willing to give her friend leisure to settle herself in her tranquil little mansion, forebore calling upon her the three following days: but on the morning of the fourth still accompanied by Clarentine, and crowded in the chaise by a thousand different presents intended equally for the mother and her children, she determined to visit her.

Madame d'Arzele, when they arrived, was sitting in the garden with her children, the youngest of whom she held upon her knees, whilst the eldest, standing before her, was repeating to her her morning lesson. At a little distance, the Chevalier

valier de Valcour, mounted upon a ladder, was gathering cherries, and throwing them down to the second girl, Pauline, who with her frock held out stood ready to receive them.

Lady Julia and Clarentine remained some time at the garden door to enjoy this scene of domestic happiness, a scene so different to that Clarentine had witnessed the first day this little family had attracted her notice! At length, however, Pauline turned her head and saw them; in an instant, forgetting her cherries, she dropped them all upon the grass, jumped nimbly over them, and uttering an exclamation of delight, sprang towards the smiling friends with open arms, and led them to her mother, whose joy on beholding them was scarcely less rapturous than that of her lovely little daughter.

When calmness was restored, and the whole party had adjourned to the usual sitting room, Clarentine and Lady Julia had an opportunity, for the first time, of judging, from their own observation, of the conversation and character of the Chevalier. The reserve usually felt by persons of a retired disposition when they

are first introduced to each other, had now given place to greater ease and confidence—and as he spoke with less restraint, they answered with less embarrassment.

If by the little they had hitherto seen of him, they had been prejudiced in his favour by the gentleness of his manners, and the elegance of his address, how much more on this interview were they charmed by the information, the liberality of mind, and the kindness of heart they found he possessed. Attentive only to the wishes of others, he forgot his own in his desire to gratify theirs; without officiousness, or affectation, he was the most friendly, the most active of human beings in the service of those he loved. Silent, and grave before strangers, yet in the society of people he could put confidence in, he was open, chearful, and communicative. Detesting from principle, and averse by nature to that species of unmeaning gallantry, so often attributed, with reason, to the natives of his country as a characteristic blemish, he was as little disposed to flatter; as he was to wound. Quiet, simple, and rational, his expressions were dictated

dictated by sincerity, his conduct guided by understanding and judgment.

It may well be imagined that such a man as this, endowed, in addition to all these advantages, with a deportment at once dignified and respectful, and a countenance the most interesting and expressive, could not fail, as he became more intimately known, to become also more particularly approved. The two friends were enchanted with him; and as they returned home, forgot their usual subjects of conversation, Madame d'Arzele and her children, to speak only of the Chevalier de Valcour.

C H A P. XII.

DURING the remaining three weeks that Clarentine spent with Lady Julia, scarcely three days were suffered to elapse without visiting Madame d'Arzele, or sending for her to Welwyn park. In the course of that time Lady Julia had suc-

ceeded in furnishing her house completely not only with necessaries, but with what to people of cultivation are absolute luxuries, such as books; a well chosen collection of which, in French, she had sent for from town; an excellent harp that had been purchased for her by her father some time before, but which, as she found she made no progress, she readily gave up, Madame d'Arzele being an uncommonly fine player; a complete set of maps for the children, and all the music, for their mother, that had been bought for herself.

Clarentine, who since her arrival at Welwyn had kept up a regular correspondence with Sophia Delmington, chiefly for the pleasure of talking to her of her French friend, had likewise excited in her and her mother the most ardent wish to become acquainted with so interesting a creature. Accordingly soon after Clarentine's return home a day was fixed, and her aunt, herself, Harriet and Sophia all rode over to *Mont-Repos*, the name Madame d'Arzele had given to her peaceful habitation.

She

She received them with that distinguished elegance and good breeding, for which the women of high birth and fashion were formerly so remarkable in France. Her conversation, in which gaiety was blended with softness, *finess* and pleasantry with the most delicate fear of offending; her countenance, which for ever varying, was for ever attractive; her cultivation, her talents and entertainment, all gave rise, in her enchanted visitors, to the most unbounded astonishment and admiration.

When the first compliments were over, and they had all taken their seats, Sophia, who had heard much of the Chevalier and was impatient to see him, besought Clarentine in a low voice, to ask why he did not appear?

“He is gone to dine at Welwyn Park,” answered Madame d’Arzele, “where I believe he will spend the evening.”

This intelligence seemed by no means to delight Sophia, though she had the good sense to disguise her vexation, and occasionally to join in the conversation with all her accustomed spirit and vivacity.

About an hour before they took leave, Madamed'Arzele's two little girls, anxious to shew Clarentine what a delightful *Escarpolette** the Chevalier had that morning put up for them in the garden, pressed her so much to go down and look at it, that at last she consented, and accompanied by Sophia left the room.

Shortly after the Chevalier returned. The sound of voices in the garden, the laughter and the gaiety that seemed to reign there, attracted him immediately to the spot, where, seated in the *Escarpolette* with her back turned towards him, he beheld Sophia holding one of his little nieces on each knee, whilst Clarentine was exerting her utmost strength in the agreeable office of swinging them.

Advancing cautiously forward, he was at Clarentine's elbow before she even suspected he was returned. Her surprise on seeing him would have led her to utter some sudden exclamation: but a sign he made the moment she turned her head withheld her from speaking, and induced

* Swing.

her

her quietly to resign her fatiguing post, and retire to a greater distance.

The Chevalier, whose health and strength rendered him scarcely more adequate to the task, than was the person he had just relieved, had pursued his occupation but a few minutes, when Sophia, looking back to urge her friend to greater speed, saw him, and almost screaming with astonishment, sprung from her seat with the two children in her arms, left them both upon the ground, and ran as quick as lightning towards the house, and upstairs in an instant !

Extremely amused by this *brusque* retreat, the Chevalier and Clarentine stood some time laughing at the causeless terror her looks had displayed, and then proceeded towards the drawing-room together.

Sophia heard their voices upon the stairs, and moving her chair back as much as possible, sought to conceal herself behind her mother and sister, in the vain hope that as the evening was beginning to shut in, she should escape, at least for that once, meeting the eyes of him

whom but a short time before she had so earnestly wished to behold.

Clarentine now entered with the two children, and the Chevalier the next moment followed her.

Madam d'Arzele no sooner saw him, than she exclaimed, "Ah, voila notre bon Chevalier!"* and then immediately requested permission to introduce him to Lady Delmington and her daughters.

Sophia trembling at the word *daughters*, would have slipped unperceived out of the room till the formidable presentation was over, but was prevented by the two little girls, who perceiving her design, put themselves between her and the door, and laughing called out, "Ah, Mademoiselle, vous n'échapperez pas comme cela! Re-merciez auparavant mon oncle de vous avoir si bien balance!"†

Sophia finding that this speech drew upon her the attention of the whole party, but particularly that of the Chevalier, stopped irresolute—coloured violently,

* "Ah, here comes our good Chevalier."

† "Ah, Mademoiselle, you must not escape us thus! Pray thank my uncle first for having swung you so well!"

and

and to his respectful bow, returned a slight, embarrassed curtsy, and without daring to look up, retreated hastily to her former seat.

Clarentine followed her, and leaning over the back of her chair was beginning to speak, when Madame d'Arzele, extremely desirous of knowing to what her children had alluded, called the eldest to her, and asked for an explanation.

"O mama," cried Eugene, distressed at the confusion she had already occasioned, "Mademoiselle Sophie may not like, perhaps, that I should tell."

This answer, though *bonnement* intended for that purpose, was but little calculated to silence farther enquiries. Lady Delmington, now as anxious to be informed as Madame d'Arzele herself, questioned Clarentine so closely, that at last the whole important secret was revealed.

"Ah, mon dieu! n'est-ce que cela?" cried Madame d'Arzele, with a laugh—"En verité, Mademoiselle Sophie, il n'y avoit pas de quoi rouger si cruellement. Le Chevalier m'a balancé ce matin, dans cette meme escarpolette, une demi heure
de

-de suite, et jamais je ne me ferez aviser d'en avoir honte."*

"Nor Sophia neither, in all probability," answered Lady Delmington, smiling, "had she not been so much taken by surprise. The Chevalier, I think, is entitled, however, to her best thanks for his politeness in undertaking such an office, especially as he was disinterested enough to do it even unknown to the person whom he obliged."

The Chevalier laughed and bowed; but forebore dwelling upon the subject, from motives of good-nature, as he still plainly saw it disconcerted Sophia extremely.

After this first introduction, the Delmingtons soon became as intimate with Madame d'Arzele as Lord Welwyn himself. The pleasure of having, in so near a neighbour, so agreeable an acquaintance, at a season when visiting was so practicable; the hope also, by shewing her all the interest and affection she inspired, of sof-

* "Bless me! Was that all? Indeed, Mademoiselle Sophie, I see nothing in all this that need have made you blush so cruelly. The Chevalier swung *me* this morning near half an hour—yet I should never have looked upon it as a thing to be ashamed of."

tening the remembrance of her recent sorrows, and of supplying to her, in some measure, the place of those friends she had so unhappily lost—all these motives combined occasioned an intercourse far more frequent, than, had she been in more prosperous circumstances, would perhaps have taken place. Lady Delmington, though she rarely walked so far herself, never denied her daughters or Clarentine the permission of doing it; and consequently their visits at *Mont-Repos* whilst the weather allowed it, were almost daily. As the winter approached, however, they were necessitated, of course, to retrench them; yet, even then, Clarentine's warmth of attachment led her dauntlessly to brave the severest temperature of a December day, and with steps as light as her heart to fall gaily forth, wrapt round in a long *Pelisse*, for the habitation of her friend.

At those times, when the weather was too boisterous to allow of her return home the same evening, some shepherd's boy from the adjacent village used to be dispatched with a note to Delmington, to request leave for her to stay till morning. This, her aunt, rather than send the servants and
horses

horses out at such a season, always consented to; and the more readily, from being persuaded that Clarentine, whilst with Madame d'Arzele, could reap nothing but benefit, and enjoy nothing but satisfaction.

It was, during one of these bleak and stormy evenings, towards the latter end of January, that whilst Madame d'Arzele and Clarentine, who was that night to sleep there, were engaged in conversation before a chearful fire, the former suddenly turning to her young friend, with more than usual tenderness, said—

“ My Clarentine, for you now allow me to call you by that endearing name, explain to me by what strange circumstance it could happen, that you, an Englishwomān, born in a province so remote from our coast, and where *les usages* of our country are so little known, should have been baptized by a name, which to English ears must sound so romantic; and which, though absolutely French, is by no means common, even among us, since I never knew more than *one* person before, that was so called ?”

Clarentine, struck by the tone of voice with which Madam d'Arzele spoke these last words, took her hand the moment she paused, and said—

“ That person, whom you mention with so melancholy a look—was she dear to you ?”

“ Oh ! dearer than any being upon earth ! She was my sister.”

“ Ah, tell me,” cried Clarentine, with an earnestness she could neither repress, nor account for ; “ tell me, what was her story ? Why do you speak of her with such emotion and sadness ?”

“ Alas !” answered Madame d'Arzele, “ in asking for her story, you demand more than I have power to grant. I never heard the exact particulars of it myself. Probably they were concealed from me from motives of prudence, it being well-known that whatever might have been her errors, I should be the last to see them with that indignation they seemed to have excited in every other individual of my family. I loved her too tenderly not to pity and forgive her faults ; and the knowledge of them, therefore, was deemed the more dangerous.”

“ Was

“ Was it by an imprudent marriage she thus forfeited her parents favour?”

“ It was—she formed a secret connection with a young foreigner whom accident introduced to her acquaintance at the English Ambassadors, during the absence of my father, who had confided her to the care of a distant relation, and from the hour of its being discovered, she was cast off by the whole offended family.”

“ Good Heaven! and was that foreigner an Englishman?”

“ Indeed,” replied Madame d’Arzele, “ I know not. His name was held in such detestation in our house that it was never mentioned before me, and when this lamented event took place, I was yet only seven years old, and consequently too young to be admitted into company, or entrusted with family affairs. As I grew up the mention of my poor Clarentine was equally forbidden—an impenetrable veil was thrown over her story—her fate was never enquired into—her existence, to all appearance, no more remembered!”

Clarentine, inexpressibly agitated during this whole conversation, acquainted with
all

all the unhappy circumstances relating to her mother's marriage, and petrified with amazement at a conformity of coincidences so striking and so singular, now, almost gasping for breath, said with the utmost emotion—

“ I cannot be mistaken—that sister, whom you so tenderly lament—you so fondly loved, Clarentine de Céligni was—my mother !”

Madame d'Arzele, starting at these words, with a look of wild astonishment; of mixed doubt, irresolution, and extacy, gazed some moments at the weeping Clarentine, without having power to speak, and then exclaimed—

“ Are you then—Oh, God! is it possible? Are *you*, dearest girl, the daughter of Clarentine de Céligni? of that sister, that friend, whom no disparity of age, no time, no absence could ever erase from my remembrance, or my heart? Can it be true? Oh speak; hasten to assure me once again, that I may, indeed, give credit to such a tale of joy !”

Clarentine, too deeply affected to be capable of making any answer, threw herself into her arms with a look that so expressively

pressively seemed to implore her belief, her acknowledgment and love, that giving way to all the fulness of her heart, Madame d'Arzele pressed her with transport to her bosom, and bathed her face with tears of the most affectionate sensibility and rapture.

The relation now followed of Clarentine's whole history, from the hour of her arrival in England, to the present moment. The premature death of her unhappy sister, which till this explanation, Madame d'Arzele had but a vague apprehension of, filled them both during its recital with grief and sadness, and most painfully embittered the first sensations of delight, occasioned by a discovery so interesting and so unexpected. The sequel of Clarentine's recital, however, by degrees effaced these melancholy impressions, and left at its conclusion no traces upon the mind, but those of gratitude towards the friends, who, from her infancy, had so generously protected her.

Madame d'Arzele, when Clarentine had ended, embraced and thanked her repeatedly for her simple little narrative. Then adverting to the calamities that had driven her and her children from France,
“ Till

“Till now,” cried she, “I could only lament them with bitterness and sorrow. Methinks, however, this moment recompences me for every suffering I have endured! Oh, that my poor father, extinguishing his resentment against the mother, in his love for her daughter, my sweet, and amiable Clarentine, could have shared in my present transports!”

At that moment the Chevalier de Valcour, who had been reading in another room, entered. Madame d’Arzele assured of the interest he would take in such a communication, instantly made him acquainted with the cause of that emotion their countenances still so visibly betrayed. He heard her with a degree of surprise scarcely inferior to that she had herself experienced; and when she ceased, expressed with the utmost warmth the joy he felt upon the occasion, and congratulated them both upon a consanguinity that would now add a stronger tie than ever to the friendship they had already formed.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

" A la naive franchise, aux grâces de l'Infance
Elle joint de la jeunesse les talents, l'Innocence ;
Belle sans le savoir la plus douce candeur,
Regne dans ses regards, ainsi que dans son cœur."

RECUEIL DE POESIES ANONYME.

SEVERAL months now elapsed in so calm and peaceful a manner, that nothing of any importance seemed to mark their progress. All that occurred during that period was the promotion of Frederick Delmington, at the age of nineteen, to a lieutenancy, by the interest and interference of Lord Welwyn, and the rise of William Somerset to the rank of post-captain.

Meanwhile, Sir Edgar, removed to Oxford, and more rarely seen at home than

ever, was become, during the vacations, a distinguished favorite with, and a frequent visitor at Lord Welwyn's. Alarmed at the progress of his attachment, and afraid to trust himself in the society of Clarentine, whose powers of attraction every day increased, he resolutely denied himself so dangerous an indulgence, and glad of any excuse to shun her, always eagerly accepted the invitations Lord Welwyn honoured him with.

Lady Julia commonly chose the time of his residence at her father's to pay a visit at Delmington House, Lord Welwyn then having a companion, and being less reluctantly induced to part with her.

Once, however, on the very day of Sir Edgar's arrival at the park, being seized with some slight illness, she sent an apology to Lady Delmington for deferring her promised visit, and ended her note with a request to see Clarentine immediately, for whom she sent the carriage.

Lady Delmington on this occasion was extremely perplexed how to act. To deny Clarentine the permission of going, at the time of all others, when her friend's indisposition rendered her company most desirable

desirable to her, she thought might appear capricious and unkind, especially, as she had been in habits of so readily and frequently allowing her that indulgence. Yet, when after an absence of three months, when Edgar was at the house, to send her to it, without any companion, Lady Julia ill, and no other woman in the family, seemed to be absolutely throwing her in his way, and voluntarily reviving all the terrors she had formerly endured on their account. Mrs. Harrington too was hourly expected. What would be her indignation, when she heard that such was the imprudent confidence with which she trusted them together, fearless of observation, and relieved from all constraint?

“No,” cried Lady Delmington, “I must not suffer it; Clarentine must remain, and, in her stead, one of my own girls shall hasten to Lady Julia.”

She then instantly wrote to her Ladyship, to inform her that Emma, not being quite well (and such, in fact, was the case) Clarentine, who was more used to her than any body, could not at that moment be spared; but that if she wished it, either
Harriet,

Harriet or Sophia should be sent to her in the evening.

Lady Julia, to whom it was almost indifferent which she received, sent back a verbal message to say she should be happy to see *either* or *both* the Miss Delmingtons as soon as it was convenient.

Accordingly, Sophia, who of the two flattered herself, and with reason, that she was preferred, went to her that very evening. She staid about a week, and then came back with her convalescent friend.

Anxious to communicate all she had observed during her visit, and habitually inclined to be more confidential with Clarentine than with any one else, Sophia ran into her room the moment she arrived, and throwing herself into a chair, thus began—

“ My dear Clarentine, I have a million of things to tell you ; come, sit down, and hear me attentively.”

“ I will,” cried Clarentine, laughing—
“ Now, therefore, speak.”

“ Well then, let me begin by informing you ; that I have made *three extraordinary* discoveries, one relating to Lady Julia, the pensive and pathetic ; the other

to Edgar, the *ci-devant* spirited and gay; and the third to *myself*, the madcap and the giddy."

"Admirably characterized all three!" said Clarentine—"pray go on."

"You must know then, that with regard to Lady Julia," resumed Sophia, "whom, of course, I shall speak of first, I have found out she is in love."

"In love!—and with whom?"

"With that identical *ci-devant* I just mentioned. Whilst I was with her, she betrayed herself a thousand different ways. To enumerate all the various symptoms, would be never ending: symptom the first however was, that she blushed whenever he looked at her; yet, Heaven knows! his looks were not very significant! Symptom the second, she sighed whenever he left her, if but for a moment: symptom the third, she faltered whenever he addressed her, and yet hated to be addressed by any other. Now, all these intelligible symptoms were so visible, that I should by no means be surprised, if Edgar understood them as well as I do, and had clearly penetrated her sentiments."

"If

“ If they are such as he wished to excite,” answered Clarentine, “ it is most probable he has. But now Sophia, tell me what discovery you have made concerning *yourself*.”

Sophia laughed, hesitated a moment, looked very arch, and then said—“ You have a thousand times more common sense than I have, Clarentine, and therefore I intrust you with this important secret; but you must promise me not to put on your *grand serieux*, not to *sermonize* me. I allow you to laugh as much as you please; all I require is, that you do not scold me.”

“ I *shall* scold you, indeed,” cried Clarentine, “ if you keep me thus long in suspense. Confess your sins at once, good girl, and if I can, I will give you immediate absolution.”

Sophia still remained irresolute some minutes—changed colour—walked about the room with an air of the most comic perplexity, and then, summoning all her courage, and speaking very quick, she said—“ During my late visit, it happened, for my sins, that your odious Chevalier de Valcour found some pretext to come to the house almost every day. At one time

it was with a book he had borrowed ; at another, with a note from his sister ; the day after, with thanks, for some little present that had been sent them ; *enfin*, he had always the art of being well received when he arrived, and the pleasure of being visibly regretted when he departed. Meanwhile, what was to become of *me* ? Often left whole hours *tete-à-tete* with him ; whilst Lady Julia was playing the Phillis with *her* Corydon, and my Lord was shut up in his study, how was I to resist the prevalence of example, and shew myself wiser than my neighbour ? In good truth, I know not, for—I did not even try ; but trusting to chance for its escape from infection, I e'en left my heart to its own guidance, and before the week was at an end, found I had irrecoverably lost it !”

Here Clarentine, who had with difficulty preserved her gravity so long, gave way to all the risibility this account was calculated to excite.

“ Ah, my poor Sophia !” exclaimed she, “ this *odious* Chevalier, I am afraid, was much more *significant* in *his* glances, than your insensible brother !”

“ Not

“ Not at all,” answered Sophia, eagerly, “ the worst of the business is, that the wretch, though he seemed *diverted* by the strange things I said to him, by my *brusqueries*, and caprices, never lost his insupportable good-humour a moment, but used to laugh at me as people do at an entertaining, spoilt child; call me always, *la jolie Sauvage*; and treat me with such an humiliating sort of indulgence, that more than once, I felt tempted to fly at his face, and demand satisfaction for such insults.”

“ O, come,” cried Clarentine, “ if you can talk thus gaily of your lover’s indifference, I begin to have some hopes of your speedy recovery.”

“ As for that,” returned Sophia, “ I put but a feeble dependance upon my gaiety, for I do not believe it will ever be in the power of any sentiment of this kind to bereave me of it for an instant—yet the sentiment may still exist, and though not with the same solemnity it would in a sentimental Lady Julia, may still, at times, torment me. If I could, however, but for one moment, succeed in putting the Chevalier into a *serious passion*; make him very fretful, very comfortless,

I think I should be happy; since the next best thing to being *beloved*, in my opinion, is being *feared*."

"Being *bated* you mean. But my dear girl, as I foresee this subject might prove inexhaustible if pursued, and we may soon be summoned to dinner, try whether for a moment you cannot forget your *ingrate*, to acquaint me with the *third* discovery you talked of."

"Ah, true; I was very near forgetting it. Know then, my dear Clarentine, that I have one concern that affects me infinitely more than all the indifference of my provoking favorite. Poor Edgar, I suspect, has got into debt at Oxford; the terror he shews whenever any letters are brought to him; the agitation with which he reads them; the disappearance, in Frederick's style, of his watch, which, during the whole time I was at Welwyn Park, I never saw him wear; and more than all, the continual anxiety observable in his countenance, incline me to think I cannot be mistaken. Yesterday, I questioned him about the watch; at first, he answered me with embarrassment and confusion, but on my pressing him still closer, became quite

quite angry, and hastily left the room. He is new to all this yet; but if he begins so early, habit, I fear, will soon familiarize him to the uneasiness he now feels."

"O, be more merciful, Sophia!" cried Clarentine, warmly. "If he *is* in debt, this, I am sure, is the first time, and that very agitation you remarked in him, ought to convince you it will be the last. I pity him, with my whole heart, and wish most sincerely that I knew how to assist him. Conceal your suspicions from your mother, and let us question Mr. Auckland upon the subject; he must know something of the truth."

"We will walk down to his house this evening," said Sophia, "and if he is at home, I will undertake to draw the whole secret from him. That this debt is formidable, I can have but little doubt, since ample as is Edgar's allowance, it is not a trifling sum that could distress him thus."

Being now called to dinner, the subject was dropped, and they both hurried down.

Their meal over, Clarentine, whilst preparing to set out for Mr. Aukland's, suddenly, recollected the pocket-book, William Somerset, near four years before, had put into her hands. Though so considerable an interval had elapsed since she had received it, so adequate to all her simple wants was the little allowance furnished her by Lady Delmington, that she had almost forgot she possessed it, and had not once applied to its contents.

“Now is the time,” cried she, as she opened her desk, “to have recourse to this sum. Mr. Somerset will applaud such a use of his bounty, and poor Edgar, perhaps, may be benefited by it materially.”

She now took out the pocket book, and unclasping it with a beating heart, began to examine the notes it enclosed. They were three in number of 10l. each. Clarentine, delighted and surprised at her own riches, determined instantly to appropriate the whole to Edgar's use, if she found him sufficiently involved to require it.

This to her who so little knew the value of money; who had never till this moment,

ment, though now arrived at the age of seventeen, experienced the want of it, either for herself or her friends, Madame d'Arzele being, by the liberality of Lord Welwyn, amply provided with every necessary and comfort, was no very great sacrifice. She lived too much out of the world to be tempted to spend much in the vanity of dress; she saw too little of that extreme poverty in the neighbouring villages, which large towns continually exhibit, to feel any scruple in spending it as her friendship for Edgar, and her gratitude to his family now directed; and she thought too nobly of Lady Delmington to imagine that she could ever be taught, by being exiled from her roof, to regret having made such a disposal of it.

Impatient to announce her resources and her decision to Sophia, she safely deposited her pocket-book in its usual recess, and hastened down to the parlour in search of her.

She found her in the hall, already prepared for their walk, and waiting anxiously for her.

Clarentine, excusing herself for having detained her, took her under the arm, and

they left the house together. After proceeding some way a very quick pace, without allowing themselves breath to speak, they both, by mutual consent, paused a moment, and insensibly renewed the conversation of the morning.

“ You have not, I hope, mentioned your apprehensions to Harriet yet ?” said Clarentine.

“ No,” answered Sophia, “ nor do I intend acquainting her with them at all. Harriet is a very good girl ; but she is not extremely subject to compassionating the weaknesses of her fellow-creatures ; and though Edgar might not care much for her remonstrances, I don’t chuse to render him liable to hearing them.”

Clarentine then spoke of the treasure she possessed ; and was proceeding to declare the use she had resolved to apply it to, when, hastily interrupting her with a look of mixed incredulity and amazement, Sophia exclaimed, “ Is it possible, Clarentine, you should *really* have such a sum ? Thirty pounds ! Good Heaven ! when did Mr. Somerset give it you, and for what ?”

Clarentine

Clarentine hesitated—the motive that had prompted the donation, the causeless fears that had occasioned it, she was unwilling to own, since those fears had, in the event, proved so totally unfounded, and might lead Sophia on hearing them so justly to accuse Somerset of illiberality and distrust. After a moment's reflection, she therefore answered—

“ He gave it me to dispose of when I grew older either in acts of charity, or in any other way I chose. Hitherto the objects that have fallen under my notice have been so few, your excellent mother so generously relieves all she hears of, and so abundantly supplies me with every necessary, that I have had no temptation to break into the original sum, and shall therefore give it up, without one moment's regret, to your poor brother, if I find he requires it. Never, my dear Sophia, must he suspect the hand, however, that offers it; never must the rest of your family hear of the transaction. Promise me on your word of honour, solemnly promise me, never to mention it.”

“ I will make no such promise,” cried Sophia, “ it would shock me to think that

money you can so generously part with should be lavished on an unthinking prodigal like Edgar!"

"O talk not thus unkindly of him!" cried Clarentine; "say not that you lament such a disposal of this sum, since, if in thus bestowing it, I can preserve him from the necessity of revealing his distresses to his mother, I shall think it but an act of duty, a retribution, due in justice from me to his family."

They were now arrived at Mr. Auckland's gate; Sophia rang, and the maid who admitted them shewed them into a parlour, where alone, and pacing the room with great agitation, they perceived Sir Edgar—

Clarentine extremely surprized—disconcerted in all her measures, and at a loss how to account for her visit; started back with a look of consciousness, and embarrassment, and then stood silently regarding Sophia, without knowing whether to advance or retreat.

Meanwhile Sir Edgar, eagerly approaching, seized her hand, and in a voice that betrayed the utmost emotion said—

"Whence

“ Whence comes my dearest Clarentine? To whom this unusual visit.”

Clarentine changed colour, and faintly replied, “ We came to consult with Mr. Aukland, to ask him some questions. Pray is he at home?”

“ No, but he is expected every moment. Sit down my Clarentine, you look hurried, you are out of breath; what is it that has disturbed you thus?”

“ How apt we are,” said Sophia archly, “ to attribute to others the same sensations we are conscious of feeling ourselves. Clarentine looks the image of tranquillity, Edgar, compared to *you*!”

Edgar, extremely disconcerted, turned away without speaking and walked to the window. A silence of some minutes succeeded, during which Clarentine observed him with concern, Sophia with curiosity. At length the former rising and following him, said with that innocent familiarity, and undisguised affection she was wont from her infancy to address him, “ you are unhappy, my dear Edgar; you seem depressed and melancholy; tell me, as to one of your oldest, and your truest

truest friends, tell me what occasions this. Are you ill?"

In answer to this enquiry, Edgar shook his head, and without venturing to look round, leaned his forehead against the frame of the window, and waved his hand for her to leave him. Clarentine, distressed and hurt by this behaviour, now resumed, in a tone of mixed sorrow and reproach—"Is this kind, Edgar? Is this friendly? Why will you not answer me? What is it you fear? Remonstrance? I have neither disposition nor authority to utter any. Breach of trust? I pledge to you my honour never to betray you. Then be sincere, *dear* Edgar, and convince me by reposing some confidence in me, that I have not wholly forfeited the affection you formerly professed for me."

"Oh, what is it you ask?" at length exclaimed he abruptly turning to her, "what is it you would know? I cannot, Clarentine, I cannot make the humiliating confession? Spare me, dearest girl, and question me no more."

"Bless me, Edgar," exclaimed Sophia, "if you are so tragical, you'll lead us to
suspect

suspect I know not what! Come let me help you out, and by *guessing* at your secret, endeavouring to spare you the mortification of revealing it. Look at me a moment; look at me well, and then tell me, whether all these qualms and agitations do not arise from your having contracted some foolish debt?—See Clarentine, he colours! my life for it, I am right!”

Edgar was silent a moment, and then in a low voice answered, “you are indeed, Sophia!”

“*C'est ce qu'on appelle parler, cela!*” cried she, “you are a good creature now, and I feel half inclined to forgive you; but you must tell us first, how you incurred this debt, and to what it amounts.”

“It amounts,” answered he, speaking very quick, and averting his eyes, “to 200l. and I incurred it at play!”

At the mention of such a sum Clarentine and Sophia turning pale, started, and in silent consternation gazed at each other a considerable time. At length Sophia recovering first, said—

“And what Sir, may I ask, is your plan? Whom do you mean to apply to?”

“Not

“ Not to my mother,” answered he, “ for I have already drawn upon her to a large amount, and far exceeded the stipend she allotted me. Not to Mrs. Harrington, for to hope from her any thing but reproach and insult would be madness. Not to my college friends, for with them my credit is exhausted.”

“ Good God !” interrupted Sophia with quickness, “ are your debts then so numerous ? Do you owe even more than this 200l. ?”

“ I owe,” said he, with affected calmness, “ more than the whole amount of my next half year’s allowance, that is to say, more than 250l. will pay !”

“ Independant of this play-debt ?”

“ Yes, utterly ?”

“ Heaven and earth !” exclaimed the indignant Sophia, “ what unheard-of extravagance ! 450l. in less than a year ! I could not have believed you capable of such folly, to call it by no worse an appellation !”

“ Hush, hush, Sophia ;” cried Clarentine mildly, “ this was not the condition upon which we sought his confidence,
the

the evil is past; and since we cannot remedy, our part is not to blame."

"Ah! dearest Clarentine!" exclaimed Edgar, extremely softened, "little as I deserve it, how grateful do I feel for this lenity! you are the sweetest, as you have ever been the most beloved of friends! How is it, that although thinking and acting uniformly right yourself, you retain an indulgence so considerate, a pity so consolatory for the errors of others. I was almost in a state of desperation till you arrived; but *your* voice, *your* looks have calmed, have soothed me, and once more restored me to reason."

"If such is her power over you," cried Sophia, affecting a tone of sarcasm, though her countenance bore visible testimony to the gentler emotions this speech had excited, "it had been fortunate for you, had she rather been at hand to prevent the *loss* of your reason, than to hasten its *restoration*; but tell me, which of these horrible debts is most pressing?"

"That I incurred at play," answered he, "there my honour is at stake—my word the only bond, and not to pay it
imme-

immediately, would be to disgrace myself eternally."

"Very likely; but *how* are you to pay it? Had you any purpose in coming hither? Any hopes from Mr. Auckland?"

"Yes—I meant to confess to him the whole affair; to entreat his advice and assistance, and to persuade him, if possible, to lend me half the sum I have the most immediate necessity for."

"And the other half? How is that to be procured?"

"Do not ask me," replied Edgar, colouring, "be content to know I have resources that will enable me to raise——"

"I understand you," interrupted Sophia, "resources, Edgar, you ought to blush at being driven to have recourse to. Your watch I know is gone;—so I suppose are your books?"

Edgar was beginning to answer, when, driving past the door in her way to Delmington House, where she had been some days expected, he saw Mrs. Harrington, and instantly retreating from the window, drawing Clarentine away at the same moment—

"O,

“ O, go, go,” he exclaimed, “ let her not see you here with me—let her not tell my mother where you have been! Go home immediately, I conjure you.”

“ Lady Delmington,” said Clarentine, amazed at his earnestness, “ knows where we are ; we have nothing to fear.”

“ She knew not that *I* should be here,” returned Edgar with increased perturbation. “ She must not hear of it! Go, I beseech you, and as soon as I have spoken to Mr. Auckland I will hasten back to Welwyn.”

He then opened the parlour door, shook hands with them as they passed, and hurried them away.

C H A P II.

CLARENTINE and Sophia arrived at their own door about a quarter of an hour after Mrs. Harrington had alighted, having, more from a vague idea of complying with Edgar's injunctions than from
any

any personal apprehensions, hurried extremely the whole way. In the hall they debated some time between themselves whether immediately to join the family in the parlour, or wait till they were summoned to tea. At length, however, they agreed to go in, and composing their features as well as they could, opened the door and advanced.

Lady Julia, brightening up at their approach, nodded good-humouredly to Clarentine, and holding out her hand to her, said—

“Where have you been all this afternoon, my dear girl?”

“At Mr. Aukland’s,” answered Clarentine, curtesying as she spoke to Mrs. Harrington, who, without rising, only returned her civility by a stiff bow.

“Was he at home?” said Lady Delmington.

“No, madam; but hearing he was expected in every moment, we sat down and waited for him, in vain, till now.”

“Did not I,” said Mrs. Harrington, “see you standing at the window as I drove by?”

“Yes, madam, I believe you did.”

“And

“ And who was there with you ? ”

Clarentine, innocent as she was, and ready as she would have been, but for Edgar's mysterious caution, to answer unhesitatingly this enquiry, blushed deeply as it was uttered, and crossing the room as she spoke, upon pretence of putting away her cloak, replied in an ill assured voice—

“ It was Sir Edgar Delmington you saw, I fancy, madam.”

“ My son ? ” cried Lady Delmington, with quickness—“ and what led him to Mr. Aukland's at so unusual an hour ? ”

Clarentine, ill-versed in dissimulation, yet but too well aware of its necessity in this case, affected to be still busied in folding up her gloves and cloak at the other end of the room, the better to conceal her embarrassment, and keeping as close to the truth as she could, answered—

“ He told us he had some business he wished to consult Mr Auckland upon.”

“ And you ladies staid,” said Mrs. Harrington drily, “ during the consultation, to assist them by your wisdom, and experience ? ”

“ No,

“ No Madam,” cried Sophia, attempting to speak with gaiety, “ we were obliged unfortunately to hasten away before Mr. Aukland returned !”

“ In my opinion,” said Mrs. Harrington, assuming a graver look, “ you had no business to remain a moment, after you found Mr. Aukland was out.”

“ Dear Ma’am,” cried Sophia, “ what harm could there be in our sitting to talk a few minutes with Edgar ? We had not—that is, Clarentine had not seen him, these ten days.”

To this Mrs. Harrington, though she looked extremely discontented, did not think proper before Lady Julia to make any reply, and therefore to the great joy of the two friends, the subject was dropped.

Just as they were sitting down to supper, a servant entered with a note for Sophia. Her mother asking who it came from, she said from Edgar, and put it into her pocket.

“ Don’t you read it directly ?” said Lady Julia—

“ No,” answered Sophia, “ it can contain nothing of any moment.”

“ Read

“Read it notwithstanding,” said Lady Delmington, “perhaps he wishes to have something sent to him.”

Sophia drew a candle near her, opened it, and found in it these words—

TO MISS S. DELMINGTON.

“All is well my dear Sophia. Mr. Auckland made no difficulty in supplying me. He has promised inviolable secrecy, Do not you, by any imprudence, betray me. Adieu, love to dear Clarentine, and am yours in great haste, E. D.

“No questions, I hope, were asked after you got home? I shall breakfast with you to morrow.”

“Well,” said Lady Delmington, when she had done reading, “what does he say to you?”

“That he shall breakfast here in the morning,” answered Sophia.

“He was not wont,” said Lady Delmington smiling, “to be so formal as to give notice of such an intention the day before.”

“Neither,” said Sophia, anxious, by giving some plausible reason for his conduct, to preclude all further enquiries,

“was

“was he wont to be so great a stranger in his own family. It is now many months, I believe, since he partook any meal with us.”

“I should be loth to imagine,” said Lady Delmington, “that he therefore considered, and meant in future to treat us, as absolute strangers.”

“I am sure,” said Lady Julia, “at the house he is now in, he will not, at least, be encouraged in such sentiments.”

“I am apt consequently to suspect,” said Mrs. Harrington, stedfastly regarding Sophia, whilst she spoke, “that Sir Edgar’s note contained intelligence far more interesting than was imparted to us.”

Sophia turned pale at this insinuation, and for a few minutes, a general silence ensued. Lady Delmington was the first to break it.

“Secrecy, I have often heard,” cried she, “always implies some wrong. This perhaps, at times may be true: but, as I have never been in the habit of extorting my children’s confidence by authoritative means, and as I am persuaded there may frequently, between an affectionate brother
ther

ther and sister, be little private communications interesting only to themselves, and in their own nature perfectly harmless, I have made it a rule never to interfere upon these occasions, when by any act of indiscretion they put themselves in danger of being betrayed."

There was a liberality, a kindness in this speech that immediately, and almost unconsciously imposed silence upon Mrs. Harrington, restored Sophia to her usual cheerfulness, and afforded a most welcome relief to poor Clarentine, who from the beginning of the conversation had sat the picture of terror, not daring to raise her eyes, changing colour every minute, and trembling lest Sophia, by any unguarded expression, should excite in the mind of her mother a suspicion of the real truth.

Early the next morning, Sophia, with Edgar's note in her hand, was at Clarentine's door : after reading it to her—

"I am come," cried she, "to dissuade you finally, my dear girl, from the generous design you yesterday mentioned to me. The gift you proposed bestowing upon this prodigal brother of mine, enor-

mous as, from so young a giver, it would seem, could in fact prove of very little, if *any*, use to him. He acknowledges, in addition to this play debt, to have others of a yet more considerable amount. Can you discharge *them*? And if you could, would it not be encouraging his extravagance? O Clarentine, retain this money for some nobler use, and bestow it not as a recompense for misconduct.

“ No,” cried Clarentine, “ I had a better purpose to answer when I talked of bestowing it on your brother : I wished to save him from public shame, to preserve him from the hardening effects of open disgrace. Should he once overcome the dread he now feels of reproach and discovery, he is lost for ever! This debt paid, the others, I thought, he might discharge by degrees ; he says himself *they* are not so pressing ; a little firmness, economy, and self-denial, would soon extricate him wholly ”

“ I wish it might prove so,” said Sophia ; “ though I greatly fear, the more easy he finds it to gain credit, the less scrupulous he will become.”

Clarentine

Clarentine hastily interrupted her: "I have no fears," cried she with earnestness; "Edgar's principles are well known to me; they are naturally those of rectitude and honour; he has a feeling and generous disposition; and though his passions may be strong, and his conduct may for a while have been faulty, his *head*, and not his *heart* has been to blame. As a proof of this you find how sensible he is to the past kindness of your mother; how unwilling to take further advantage of that kindness; and how ready, sooner than distress her by fresh applications, to part with all his valuables even at the risk of immediate detection. My dearest Sophia, suffer me then still to indulge the hope that I may be useful to him; and since you will not lend me that assistance I had ventured to expect from you, at least, give me your word, not to reveal to any other the conversations we have had upon the subject."

"I told you before, my best Clarentine," cried Sophia, "and I now repeat what I then said, I would not for the universe make any such promise. The moment I have reason to suspect you of

having been guilty of so great a piece of folly, I openly confess the whole affair to my mother, and involve Edgar, as well as you, in a general discovery. Do not therefore accuse me of unkindness to him, or breach of trust with regard to you. To do *him* a *real* service, to oblige *you* in a *rational* way, I would scarcely hesitate at any thing: but mad as I sometimes am, I will never contribute towards carrying on an affair, for which I should so deservedly merit a cell in Bedlam for life. To prevent all possibility consequently of your persisting in this design, I now solemnly declare to you, that unless you give me your word of honour to drop the whole scheme, I will this very morning make Edgar acquainted with it, on purpose to put him upon his guard against receiving any money that may come to him through an unknown channel."

The seriousness and earnestness with which this was uttered terrified Clarentine, who, after vainly endeavouring to make Sophia retract her alarming threat, promised to think no more of the business, but to let matters take their own course,

course, without interfering in their arrangement in any way whatever.

At nine o'clock Sir Edgar, according to his appointment, arrived. He looked more chearful than he had done for some time, yet still at intervals appeared absent and thoughtful. Clarentine almost rejoiced to observe it, since it at once evinced sensibility, and contrition. She fought not however to speak to him in private, and advised Sophia to observe the same caution.

At an early hour he ordered his horse, and rode back to Welwyn.

Lady Julia, as soon as he was gone, threw aside her work, and invited Clarentine to walk with her in the garden.

After conversing some time upon general subjects, Clarentine observing that Lady Julia listened to, and answered her with an air of inattention that proved she scarcely knew one syllable she had been saying, suddenly stopped, and looking at her with a smile, said—

“ Pray Lady, Julia, why did you wish for a companion during your walk ?”

“ Why ?” repeated Julia, surprised at the enquiry, “ Because I hate to wander

about alone, and always rejoice when I can find an opportunity of conversing with you without restraint."

"Of *meditating* with me, you mean," cried Clarentine, "since surely where there are only two, and where *one* only of those two utters a single word, the term *conversation* cannot with any propriety be applied to the *triste*, and unsupported efforts of that solitary speaker."

Lady Julia coloured, and pressing Clarentine's hand, replied—

"I acknowledge, dear girl, the justice of your reproof. My silence and stupidity well deserved it, and I ask a thousand pardons for having called it forth. The truth is," continued she, not suffering Clarentine, who, hurt at her seriousness would have interrupted her, "my mind is wholly employed in reflecting upon the contents of a letter I received this morning from my father. Can you keep a secret Clarentine? If you can, I will tell you what he says to me."

"Try me," said Clarentine, smiling, "and I hope you will have no cause to accuse me of indiscretion."

Lady

“ Lady Julia stood suspended a moment, looked confused, and irresolute: but on Clarentine’s urging her to proceed, at length went on—

“ My father,—I would he had spared me so dangerous a confidence,—charmed with the rectitude of principles, the elegance of manners, the noble generosity of character so conspicuous in Sir Edgar Delmington, has, he informs me, after consulting his mother and family, entered into engagements with the former, which, when he comes of age, are to confirm me his for ever! The narrowness of Sir Edgar’s fortune was with him no impediment, mine being by the death my poor brother considerable; and Mrs. Harrington having, I understand, in consideration of this alliance, declared she will leave us, at her death, all she possesses.”

Clarentine, who had attended to this communication with sparkling eyes, and looks that denoted the most sensible delight, now affectionately embraced Lady Julia, and exclaimed—

“ You have long permitted me, dearest Lady Julia, to call you by the name of
K 4 friend,

friend, to treat you with the freedom and familiarity of an equal. Our Edgar, you know, is as dear to me as a brother. This union, the most desirable in every respect that could take place, gives me through him an additional title to your regard; makes me *your* sister, as well as *his*, and leaves me without a wish, except for your mutual and lasting happiness."

"Alas! my Clarentine," cried Lady Julia, shaking her head, "you little suspect how much reason I have to be averse to this, apparently, unobjectionable marriage; to dread it even, and lament it ever was proposed. Sir Edgar has been informed of my father's future intentions in his behalf, yet far from appearing desirous of profiting by them, or of making himself any interest in my heart, he behaves to me with a degree of indifference, of negligence, the most mortifying, and the most offensive."

Clarentine, sincerely grieved at this speech, attempted however to disguise the concern it gave her under an appearance of incredulity. With a look of assumed gaiety she therefore replied—

"How

“How difficult all these lovers are to please! I really believe there is no passion makes the human heart so suspicious, so perverse! Poor Edgar little imagines he can have merited such a reproach; yet were he to hear it, how flattering to him would it be! But tell me, Lady Julia, and tell me honestly, is it your *pride*, or your *affection* his supposed indifference wounds the deepest.”

“You ask me,” replied Lady Julia, “more than I know how to answer. When he is present, all resentment I find lost in sorrow; when absent, resentment, nearly unmixed with sorrow, takes the lead.”

“I understand this distinction,” cried Clarentine, “and am now convinced you love him with all the tenderness that his thousand excellent qualities deserve. This conviction gives me more pleasure than I can well express. Edgar was formed for social happiness, for domestic enjoyments. He loves reading, delights in female society, and is naturally of so affectionate a disposition, that to have known him married to a woman who was

not truly sensible of all his worth, would have made me wretched."

"And yet Clarentine," resumed Lady Julia, "whilst he perseveres in his present conduct; whilst coldly subscribing to his mother's plans without being anxious for their success, he continues to treat me with such carelessness and apathy, my fixed determination is, never to become his wife. The renunciation, though it may perhaps be painful to my heart, will be grateful to my insulted pride. I am sure of my father's indulgent acquiescence to this refusal, when once he is convinced I am serious in desiring it; and almost secure likewise of possessing, through *your* early lessons, my dearest Clarentine, sufficient spirit to enable me to conquer my own regret, should I feel any after the rejection becomes public. You first taught me to overcome the habitual indolence of my character, and infused into my mind that resolution and firmness by which I hope to be supported."

"I should be sorry to believe," said Clarentine gravely, "that I had been so wholly mistaken in my notions of *firmness*, and *resolution*, as to instill *irritability* and
peculance."

petulance in their place. Assure yourself, Lady Julia, I never meant to recommend such substitutes; and grieved indeed should I be, could I imagine that the sentiments by which you are now actuated had originally been implanted by me. I am convinced you do Sir Edgar the greatest injustice, when you conceive him capable of assenting to the views of his family upon motives so mercenary as those of mere interest and ambition. He may not perhaps, I cannot bring myself, even when pleading for him, to flatter you, feel for you that romantic egree of passion you seem desirous of inspiring: but of this I am certain, he admires you extremely; he appeared sensibly touched by the relation that was given him of your kindness and benevolence towards Madame d'Arzele, and her little family; he reveres and loves your father more than any man he knows, and has the sincerest value for you. What more, in reason, dear, dear Lady Julia, would you wish?"

"Well, my dearest Clarentine," answered Lady Julia, who although she had been a little hurt at the beginning of this speech, could not forbear smiling at its

K 6 conclusion,

conclusion, " I may have been wrong, I may have been unjust; in expiation therefore of these errors, accept my promise not to act with precipitation in this affair, not to suffer myself in future to be guided by pique, or *irritability*; but to wait patiently, without taking any steps in it whatever, the moment when Sir Edgar comes of age, and chuses frankly to declare himself."

Clarentine, tranquillized by this assurance, then quitted her friend to set out on one of her accustomed morning visits to the family at *Mont Repos*.

Madame d'Arzele was at this time involved in much domestic uneasiness. Her children, in the course of the winter, had all three been seized with the measles. The two youngest, at the end of a few weeks, happily recovered: but Eugenie, the eldest, had never, from that time, wholly regained her former strength, and within the last month, particularly, had so cruelly alarmed her mother, by the languor and feverishness which constantly preyed upon her, and gradually undermined her whole constitution, that after consulting with the physician to
whom

whom Lord Welwyn, at the beginning of their illness, had recommended them, she had, at last, determined, for a short time, to try change of air, and remove to some little village nearer the sea-coast. At the same moment, however, she acknowledged with a forced smile, that her finances not being in a very flourishing condition, having resolutely and constantly rejected all such donations from Lord Welwyn as were wholly pecuniary, she was under some difficulty with regard to the expences this little journey would unavoidably involve her in: "I expect a small supply, however," continued she more gaily, "next week from a friend in town, to whom I lately sent some drawings of the Chevalier's, and some work of my own to dispose of, and the instant that arrives, I hope to set out. He is now actually gone to Sidmouth, to look about in its vicinity for some cheap and eligible lodging for us; and when you entered, my dearest Clarentine, I was writing to Lady Julia an account of my intention, and its motive."

Clarentine, affected by this candid statement of her friend's embarrassments,
and

and extremely desirous of exempting her from the painful necessity of deferring a plan, her maternal solicitude rendered her so anxious to accomplish, now besought her most earnestly to receive from her, in consideration of their near relationship, that assistance she had rejected from Lord Welwyn. A friend, she added, had enabled her by his liberality to make the offer; an offer, which, if upon condition Madame d'Arzele would honour her by accepting, she would accompany with a promise of attending her to Sidmouth, or if she could not immediately be spared, of following her thither, as soon as Lady Delmington gave her permission.—

“ You will want, dearest Madam,” continued she, “ some one to support, to cheer, to assist you in the task of attending upon your sick child; and who ought you sooner to chuse than her, who loving you with such affection, and feeling so deeply interested in all that concerns you, will take so much pleasure in the office?”

Madame d'Arzele listened to this truly friendly proposal with streaming eyes,
and

and upon Clarentine's renewing her entreaties, at length, *in part*, accepted it. Rejoicing in her success, and as prompt in executing, as in planning any purpose of benevolence, Clarentine then took leave, in order to hasten home, and solicit that approbation she was so anxious to obtain,

C H A P III.

IT was so late when Clarentine reached home, that on her entering the dining-room, she found the whole family ready to sit down to table. It was not, therefore, till evening she had an opportunity of speaking to her aunt upon the subject that now wholly engrossed her.

Lady Delmington, but too sensible of the inveterate and hourly encreasing prejudices Mrs. Harrington had conceived against her unoffending niece, and, consequently, by no means sorry to embrace
so

so good an opportunity of removing them from each other, made no difficulty in complying with Clarentine's request.— She offered to furnish her with a sufficient supply of money for the journey, and proposed paying regularly for her board during her absence. To this, however, Clarentine, averse to hoarding her little treasure in secrecy any longer, warmly, but gratefully objected, acquainting her aunt, at the same time, with the generosity of young Somerset, and the use his noble gift was now destined to answer. Lady Delmington applauded her friendly purpose; expressed the kindest anxiety respecting the recovery of her little favourite, and encouraging her to hasten as much as possible so desirable an expedition, left her, to rejoin Mrs. Harrington and Lady Julia.

At ten, a note arrived from Lord Welwyn, soliciting the pleasure of seeing the whole family to dinner the next day. Lady Delmington, with the approbation of Mrs. Harrington, accepted the invitation, and wrote an answer to that effect, which she sent back by his Lordship's messenger.

The

The next day, however, Mrs. Harrington complaining of indisposition, and feeling by no means inclined, either from habitual civility, or natural good-humour, to sacrifice the slightest personal indulgence to the gratification of others, very bluntly declared — notwithstanding she therefore reduced her polite hosts to the necessity of staying at home herself, or of leaving one of her daughters behind—she was determined to give up her engagement. The young people, upon this, well knowing how disagreeable to Lady Delmington would be a whole day spent *tete-à-tete* with such a companion, all offered to supply her place. She was too indulgent, however, to listen to their entreaties; and consequently, at the appointed hour, Lady Julia, Clarentine, and her two cousins, sat out for Welwyn Park.

Among those who formed a part of the company they were introduced to, was a Mr. Eltham, a nephew of Lord Welwyn's, just arrived from London. This young man, born to a splendid fortune, already emancipated from every species of controul, and now rendered by circumstances,

stances, sole heir to all his uncle's landed property, was as remarkable for the elegance of his figure as the fire and animation of his ever-dauntless countenance. Possessing all the boldness and intrepidity that conscious independence and impunity can confer, he could vie, though yet scarcely more than two and twenty, with the oldest practitioners in extravagance, folly, and dissipation. His manners were easy, gay, and careless; his conversation, when he wished to please, spirited, and entertaining; and his understanding, however wild, and flighty, naturally quick, penetrating, and brilliant.

From the time Clarentine, who, unfortunately, was placed opposite to him, took her seat at table, he scarcely, for a moment, fixed his eyes on any other object. Her beauty, it was evident, had excited his utmost admiration; and the unaffected modesty of her countenance, where no shame-faced bashfulness appeared to deform the native ingenuousness of its expression; the elegant simplicity of her manners, and the graceful symmetry of her form—his utmost astonishment.

Who

Who she could be—or how, in such a secluded situation, she had acquired so distinguished a superiority, it was not easy to imagine. When she entered, being engaged in conversation with another gentleman, he had not heard her name, and therefore was yet doubtful whether she formed a part of the Delmington family, or was only an occasional visitor at their house. Impatient to obtain fuller information, he seized the first opportunity, after she had left the room with the other ladies, of questioning Sir Edgar upon the subject.

“Allow me to ask, Sir,” said he, “whether that lady whom you sat next at dinner was any relation of yours?”

Sir Edgar answered, that she was.

“Is her name Delmington?”—“Yes, Sir.”—“Does she live with you?”—“Yes, Sir.”—“Pray then is she an orphan?”

Edgar never very tolerant of any thing that in the slightest degree bordered upon impertinence, and particularly provoked at being so freely interrogated respecting Clarentine, affected not to hear this last question,

question, but turned away, and addressed himself to his next neighbour.

Eltham, however, was not of a temper to be so easily discouraged. He now therefore openly applied to Lord Welwyn himself, and speaking to him across the table—

“ I must beg, my Lord,” cried he, “ that you would indulge me with some account of the young lady who went last out of the room. Is it true, that she has been buried all her life in the dismal solitude of an old country mansion, unseen, unknown, and doomed to pine in obscurity and neglect?”

Lord Welwyn laughed. “ The dismal solitude,” answered he, “ of that old country mansion, you would, I believe, with such a companion, be very happy to find yourself condemned to. You are mistaken, however, if you suppose she is either *neglected*, or *unknown*. Her goodness, her accomplishments and beauty, have all rendered her an object of universal admiration; and I meet with no one who has ever conversed with her, who does not equally respect and love her.”

“ Ah,

“ Ah, my Lord !” cried Eltham, “ beware lest you praise her with too much enthusiasm ! that captivating, that bewitching face, requires not the aid of so eloquent a panegyrist !”

“ Her face,” returned Lord Welwyn, “ constitutes one of her least perfections. She is chiefly to be valued for the qualities of her heart, the undeviating truth and rectitude of her character. She has spent much of her time here with my daughter, and given me the fairest opportunity of studying her disposition, and appreciating her real worth ! Invariably, and constantly has she proved herself upright, and pure of intention ; affectionate, and gentle of mind ; fixed, and steady of principle !”

“ Dear my lord,” exclaimed Eltham, “ that you would but take *my* eulogium in hand ! You paint, in such glowing colours, that the vilest subject might gain beauty from your touch.”

“ Wait,” replied his Lordship, smiling, “ till we are called to tea, and in presence of the fair Clarentine, I will undertake the task.”

“ I distrust

“ I distrust you a little, my Lord;” cried Eltham, “ but will, however, abide by the consequences, and accept the proposal.”

Soon after, the expected summons arrived, and the gentlemen all readily repaired to the drawing-room.

Clarentine on their entrance, was sitting with Sophia at a window, in earnest conversation. Lord Welwyn, followed by his nephew, went up to her, and addressing her with a good-humoured smile—

“ My dear young lady,” said he, “ I am commissioned by this gentleman to renew his introduction to you; he fears that during the bustle of the general presentation that took place before dinner, you may have over-looked him, and much wishes to be more particularly made known to you. Are you, at this moment, at leisure to attend to me?”

Clarentine half-laughing, bowed, and answered—

“ Certainly, my lord.”

“ Why then,” resumed his Lordship, “ George Eltham, Esq. approach and hear your birth, parentage, and education

tion minutely discussed. He was born, Miss Delmington, in the year 17—, of a father who, dying when he was only five years old, left him heir to an immense estate; at nine, he was sent to Westminster school; at 17 to Oxford; three years after to the continent; and here he now stands, just returned from Italy, as finished a coxcomb, and as compleat *a man of the world*, as I ever had the honour of being acquainted with. Moreover, till within this last twelvemonth, he was my ward, and claims the privilege of calling me uncle."

Eltham, at the conclusion of this *animated encomium*, felt, notwithstanding all his effrontery, something like embarrassment. He attempted however to disguise it under a forced laugh; and turning upon his heel, fauntered towards the tea-table, and threw himself into a chair next Lady Julia.

Meanwhile, Clarentine and Sophia, extremely amused, both exclaimed the moment Lord Welwyn paused—

"A very inviting character indeed!"

"O, you know not yet," cried his Lordship, "half its merits! He can
drink

drink hard, play high, fight desperately. Every new face he sees turns his head; every artful designer preys upon his fortune. In love and friendship he is equally a dupe! yet, with the same folly, few, perhaps, are possessed of so much openness and undisguised extravagance as my graceless nephew. No hypocrisy, no dissimulation covers the multitude of *his* sins. They are all plain as the day, and public as the sun!"

"My Lord," said Sophia, "if he takes so little pains to conceal his faults, you have at least the comfort of knowing he will seduce no one else into their practice. A character so thoughtless, must be incapable of employing any artifices in order to misguide others."

"The contagion of example, my dear Sophia," replied his Lordship, "is perhaps quite as dangerous as the force of precept. Where there is youthful gaiety, spirit, generosity, and courage, much will be overlooked, much pardoned, and I fear, much imitated. Thousands are at first sight dazzled by the brilliant exterior of an agreeable profligate, who never would have listened, for an instant, to

the fallacious logic of premeditated seduction. Eltham, setting aside his morals, is the pleasanter creature I ever knew, and has a *fund* of humour, originality and good-nature, rarely to be equalled. Can you imagine then, he wants either subtlety, or argument to mislead?"

Here Clarentine being called upon by Lady Julia to assist her in making tea, the conversation was interrupted, and Lord Welwyn rejoined his other guests.

"Mr. Eltham," said Lady Julia, as Clarentine advanced, "is extremely desirous of knowing what you and my father have been talking about. He insists upon it, *he* was the sole subject of your long conference."

"Could Mr. Eltham," cried Clarentine, "indeed suspect this, and yet want courage to listen to what was said of him."

"I sustained the *first* shock so ill," replied he, "that, to my shame be it acknowledged, I had not resolution sufficient to stand a second."

"You were then taken by surprise," cried Lady Julia, laughing, "since otherwise, it would not have been found an easy matter to have disconcerted *you* so

soon. A few animadversions upon your conduct, or a brief recital of two or three of the charming anecdotes that have reached my father's ears respecting you, are not things of such consequence as to confound, or abash, a man of so much intrepidity. They are rather calculated to excite your vanity, as so many proofs of your gallantry and spirit."

"*Et tu, Brute?*" cried Eltham reproachfully, "upon my soul, this is not fair! Be content, my gentle Coz, with the inhuman mortifications I have already endured, and rather seek to re-establish, than to sink me yet lower, in your friend's good opinion."

Then turning to Clarentine, after a short pause, "Will Miss Delmington," said he smiling, "permit me to ask what she conceives to be the actual meditations of the gentleman now standing at that farthest window? His *eyes* seem to have found a pleasant resting place, but where may his *thoughts* be wandering?"

Clarentine, starting at this speech, raised her head, and looked towards the spot he had alluded to. There she beheld Sir Edgar Delmington, leaning over the
back

back of a chair, and stedfastly observing her with a stern and angry countenance; whilst Sophia, unconscious of the total disregard with which he heard her, was gaily repeating the conversation that had just passed between Lord Welwyn and Clarentine.

Shocked, and astonished, at being made an object of such gloomy contemplation, Clarentine instantly arose, and hastening towards him with the most anxious solicitude, besought him to tell her what was the matter; why he looked so disturbed; and why, when every one else was engaged in conversation, and seemed cheerful and happy, he alone preserved an air of such thoughtfulness and discontent?

“ You are not offended with any body, dear Edgar?” continued she, “ are you?”

“ Gratified, and soothed by the kindness of her enquiries, yet ashamed of acknowledging the real cause of his uneasiness, Sir Edgar’s countenance immediately assumed a gentler expression, and with a sort of serious smile, he answered,

“ No, my dearest Clarentine, not now. You have restored me to good-humour.”

“ But what,” cried she, looking earnestly at him, “ originally disturbed you?”

Without answering this question, he extended to her his hand with an air, that seemed to solicit her forgiveness, but upon her reproachfully refusing to accept it, affected an appearance of careless indifference, and leaving her with Sophia, walked up to Lord Welwyn, and the other gentlemen.

Clarentine looked after him as he crossed the room, and shrugging her shoulders, exclaimed, “ You have a strange brother, my poor Sophia ! He really becomes more unreasonable and more irritable every day ! It is impossible to depend upon him a moment, for whether grave or gay, his mirth and his sadness seem equally to result from whim and caprice !”

“ I cannot dispute it,” said Sophia, “ though I must honestly confess I understood not one word that either of you uttered. How came you to know he was angry ? *I* did not even suspect it.”

“ You did not look at him then,” said Clarentine.

“ No,

“ No, I was too busily engaged in telling my own story, to watch, very narrowly, every change of his countenance. Besides, I always think it time enough to know that people are angry when they tell me so, and never take pains to find it out by their looks. What they *say* is all that concerns me; what they *think* it is seldom worth our while to investigate.”

Clarentine agreed to the truth of this, but to account for her too-apparent readiness in making such discoveries, repeated to her Mr. Eltham’s sarcastic observation, as having first directed her attention towards Sir Edgar; and ended, by declaring with some warmth, that she was sincerely rejoiced at the prospect she had of quitting Delmington for a short time, since, whilst Mrs. Harrington resided there, and Edgar was so inexplicably gloomy, and unlike his former self, she had lost all hope of enjoying any degree of happiness or comfort.

Before Sophia, who seemed much hurt by this speech, had time to answer it, Lady Julia sent Mr. Eltham to summon them both to the card table. Clarentine, very little used to playing, and at all times parti-

larly averse to it, immediately excused herself upon the plea of ignorance, and entreated Sophia, who was rising, to follow Mr Eltham, to apologize to Lady Julia for her.

As soon as they were gone, taking up a candle that was placed near the door, she stole unperceived out of the room, and knowing perfectly the disposition of every apartment in the house, hastened down to the library. There, seating herself at the table, she selected from a number of books which were scattered over it the charming poem, entitled "the Pleasures of Memory," and soon forgot, in the delight with which she perused it, the momentary chagrin she had experienced.

From this interesting employment she was presently disturbed by the sound of approaching footsteps in the adjoining room; she listened attentively, when, equally to her surprise and vexation, the door was suddenly thrown open, and Mr. Eltham appeared.

Affecting an air of astonishment as he approached her, "Good God, Miss Delmington," exclaimed he, "how long have you been here? I left every body
in

in the drawing-room wondering at your absence, and in pain for you lest you should be ill."

"It is time then," said Clarentine, who from the moment of his entrance had risen, and now advanced towards the door, "I should, by returning, put an end to their conjectures."

First," cried he, attempting to take her hand, "tell me you forgive this intrusion, and shew me what book you were reading."

"You will find it upon the table," said she, again advancing forward, "and as you do not play this evening, I would recommend it to your perusal."

"But stay with me then, Miss Delmington," cried he, "and whilst they are all so earnestly engaged above, let us read it together."

"What? and leave every body in such pain about my health?" cried Clarentine smiling; "O no, Mr. Eltham, you cannot wish it, I am sure."

So saying, as he had no farther pretence to withhold her, she immediately left the room, and soon found herself

beyond his reach, and quietly seated by the side of Lady Julia.

• To the numerous questions that were now asked her, concerning her sudden disappearance, she made such slight answers, as in a very short time prevented further enquiries; and finding soon after that Eltham, who was already returned, and it was plain had merely left the room in pursuit of her, sat the only disengaged person present except herself, and anxiously sought to draw her into conversation, she determined, in order to free herself from his attentions, to propose playing also, when it would be impossible for him to attach himself to her, more particularly than to any one else.

For this purpose, at the beginning of a new deal, she begged Harriet and Sophia would make room for her between them, and requested permission to join in the game. Glad to encrease their number, as at what they were playing, they were at liberty to admit as many as they chose, they immediately consented, and accordingly she took her place, fully resolved not to quit it till the whole party broke up.

Eltham,

Eltham, by this manoeuvre, left totally to his own inventions, and but ill-skilled apparently in the happy art of abstracting his thoughts in a large company from surrounding objects, to direct them solely towards such points as were likely to afford him amusement from within, soon grew weary of the comparative solitude of his situation, and once more abruptly rising, went back to the library, where he remained till Lady Delmington's carriage drove to the door.

Hastily passing Lady Julia, whom on his return to the drawing-room he met going down stairs, conducted by Sir Edgar, he advanced eagerly towards Clarentine, and assisting her in putting on her cloak, took her hand, and leading her forward, said, "Well, Miss Delmington, I have been looking into the charming poem you recommended to me, and am extremely pleased with it. If, as I imagine, you have not yet concluded it, I will do myself the honour of bringing it to you to-morrow morning."

"I beg you would not give yourself so much trouble, Sir," said Clarentine,

L 5

"Lady,

“ Lady Julia will perhaps send for it herself, and then—

“ My dear Madam,” interrupted he, laughing, “ it were vain for you to attempt opposing my intrusion at your house, since, independent of the pleasure I shall have in paying my respects to Lady Delmington and yourself, I have yet another apology for my visits, in the person of Lady Julia, to whom my near relationship entitles me, in some measure, to become an occasional tormentor as long as my residence in her vicinity admits it. You find, therefore, that your case is desperate. Arm yourself then with patience and resignation.”

Then putting her into the carriage, and wishing her good-night, he made a general bow to the rest of the party, and ran back into the house.

During their ride home, Clarentine, who could not forbear laughing at the singularity of his last speech, repeated it to Lady Julia, and at the same time gave her some account of what had passed between them in the library. This recital at once explained to them all his reason for refusing to play; and led them afterwards

wards, in a strain of good-humoured raillery, to congratulate Clarentine upon the conquest she had made.

“A conquest, however,” cried Sophia, “not to be very confidently relied upon, I fear, if Lord Welwyn’s report, at least, is to be credited. I am really sorry for it; his vivacity delights me, and I should be extremely pleased with such a relation. Try whether you cannot fix him, Clarentine; it would be laying us all under the highest obligations; for, if he staid in the country, how enchantingly would he enliven our winter parties!”

“With such favourable dispositions towards him,” answered Clarentine, “you are more likely than any other to succeed yourself. By all means therefore, let me advise you to make the experiment.”

“O, *me*? why, my dear girl, he paid me no more attention than if I had not been in the room, and scarcely looked at me the whole day.”

“So much the better,” said Clarentine, “you may conclude therefore that his neglect was accidental, and arose rather

from his own want of penetration than your want of attractions."

"Very true," cried Sophia, affecting great satisfaction at this encouraging speech, "I did not think of that before. You are a clever girl, Clarentine; and I give you infinite credit for the justice of the remark. To-morrow then, if this uncourteous knight designs to honour us with a visit, I may hope, (*you* absent however, and *myself* set off, to the best advantage) to make a greater impression upon him!—aye, that will do extremely well: and I shall be *almost* as well pleased as if any other had won the day."

Thus did this light-hearted and happy girl run on till the carriage stopped, when bidding her companions compose their countenances, that Mrs. Harrington might not be shocked by too great an appearance of gaiety, they alighted, and gravely proceeded towards the supper room.

Lady Delmington, who was reading aloud when they entered, received them with her accustomed cordiality and kindness; but Mrs. Harrington, an adept in the illiberal art of misconstruing appearances, instantly observing, notwithstanding

ing her endeavours to conceal it, an uncommon tendency to risibility in Sophia's face, drily remarked, as soon as they sat down, that she was glad to perceive their concern for those they had left at home did not seem at all to have affected their spirits, at least, if she might judge by the happy unconcern that shewed itself in their countenances.

“ Dear ma'am,” said Sophia giddily, “ I am sure that did not contribute to enliven us; I dare say we none of us ever thought of the matter. I hope however,” added she, “ you find yourself better this evening?”

Though uttered hastily, without reflection, and without design, this unfortunate speech put the finishing stroke to poor Sophia's disgrace. Mrs. Harrington's remonstrances upon it were pointed and severe; even Clarentine and Harriet were not exempted from her displeasure: but, though they had both observed the strictest silence from the moment of their entrance, found themselves unexpectedly involved in it, merely for having omitted, when they came in, the ceremonious and insignificant etiquette of enquiring how
she

she did before they ventured to seat themselves.

So long, and so tedious were her reproaches upon this subject, that Lady Julia, utterly unaccustomed to such lectures, and wearied beyond measure at its duration, rung for her woman before it was half over, and curtsying in silence to Lady Delmington, hastened to her own room.

Not daring to follow her example, the ill-fated trio, now oppressed and saddened, sat down to supper as soon as she was gone, and though all appetite was lost, and to eat was out of the question, preserved a tolerable good countenance till the cloth was removed, and they were released by the welcome sound of the great house clock, which at length struck the hour at which they were wont to retire.

C H A P. IV.

THE next morning, Clarentine, by no means thinking herself under any obligation to remain at home on Mr. Eltham's account, and feeling indeed far from anxious to appropriate to herself any part of the honour his visit might be intended to confer, walked to *Mont-Repos* as soon as breakfast was over, to enquire whether the Chevalier de Valcour was returned, and what had been the success of his expedition.

He met her at the door with his hat on, upon the very point of setting out for Delmington himself. They both entered the parlour together, where, in presence of Madame d'Arzele, he gave her the detail for which she was so anxious.

In the first place he told her, that, at the distance of about half a mile from Sidmouth, he had discovered a farmhouse very pleasantly situated, in which were two ready-furnished bed-chambers and a parlour, that might immediately be hired upon the most reasonable terms
(including

(including the use of the kitchen) either by the week or month, which ever suited best. He next informed her that the little supply for which Madame d'Arzele had waited, arrived the preceding evening, and that consequently, nothing now remained but for Clarentine to fix the time when it would be most convenient for her to set out.

"O let it not rest upon that," cried she earnestly, "my time is Madame d'Arzele's. Whenever, therefore, her dear little girl is able to bear the removal, I am at her command."

"Then my best Clarentine," said that lady, "as I am now extremely anxious to avoid all further delay, we will begin our journey, if you please, the day after to-morrow. The Chevalier will see us safe to our place of destination; and then returns to spend the period of my absence at Lord Welwyn's, who, this morning, sent him the most pressing and cordial invitation to that purpose. My *femme de chambre* will go with us; the other maid remains here to take care of the house."

This point being settled, Clarentine embraced the three children, and bidding
Madame

Madame d'Arzele an affectionate farewell, left the house, and escorted by the Chevalier, directed her steps homewards.

As their road lay directly between Welwyn Park and Delmington, it appeared extremely probable to Clarentine that either in his way to, or from the last-mentioned place, she might meet Mr. Eltham. Neither anxious, however, to avoid such a meeting, nor to promote it, she walked quietly on, preparing herself to expect it, yet perfectly indifferent whether it took place or not.

In this disposition of mind, she reached home without any molestation, secretly congratulating herself upon that, which, notwithstanding all her philosophy, she could not help regarding as an escape; and followed by the Chevalier, joined the usual party in the great parlour.

She had scarcely had time to deliver Madame d'Arzele's compliments, and apologies for not calling before she went, and to announce to Lady Delmington the plan that had been agreed upon, when the door opened, and Mr. Eltham was announced.

He

He was accompanied by Sir Edgar, who came, he said, to beg his room might be prepared for him to sleep in the following night, as, the next day, he was going with Mr. Eltham to dine at a gentleman's house in the neighbourhood, at which he expected to be detained so late, that, fearful of disturbing Lord Welwyn by returning at such an hour, he meant not to go back to his house till the morning after.

"A very prudent plan indeed!" cried Lady Delmington, "and why, my dear Edgar, should you consent to stay so late?"

"O, the nights are very light now," cried Eltham, "and *I'll* engage, should Sir Edgar find himself at all embarrassed, to guide him home in perfect safety."

"Why *you* don't propose to sleep here too?" said Lady Julia, "do you?"

"Certainly not," answered he, "I have not the presumption to imagine I should be admitted: but to quiet Lady Delmington's apprehensions, I would gladly escort Sir Edgar hither, even at the risk of being shut out of my own resting-place."

"And

“ And, where, may I ask, will *be* your resting-place, Sir?” said Lady Delmington smiling.

“ At the inn at Lyfton, Madam,” answered he.

“ Why then Edgar,” resumed her Ladyship, “ I think that had better be *yours* also. I am not at all more desirous of having my house disturbed in the middle of the night than Lord Welwyn can be; and since you both seem disposed to conform to the same hours, you may surely both conform to the same accommodations.”

“ Alas! Madam,” cried Eltham, “ I fear, reasonable as this plan is, it cannot be put in execution. My hopes of securing a bed for myself were at one time so forlorn, that I was very near coming to supplicate for one here, as well as Sir Edgar. I should have had *Lady Julia’s* interest, I am sure; and was persuaded I might rely upon *her* seconding my petition most earnestly ”

Lady Julia shook her head, and laughed, but made no answer; and Sir Edgar addressing his mother, said, “ What Mr. Eltham tells you, madam, is really the case.

case. We have been to Lynton this very morning; but found the town so amazingly filled, owing to the fair, which is now held there, that it was impossible to procure more than one bed."

"Well then," said Lady Delmington. "your room shall be prepared: but I hope, my dear Edgar, you will not make it a practice to keep such intolerable hours, for they are extremely disagreeable to me."

"Blame Mr. Eltham, madam," cried Lady Julia, "since I have not any doubt but that it was he who seduced Sir Edgar into forming this horrid engagement. Confess the truth honestly," continued she, "and tell us whether it is not so?"

Eltham was beginning an answer, when the entrance of Mrs. Harrington, whom he had never before seen, put a stop to it; and going round to Clarentine, who sat at work at a little table near the window, he leaned over the back of her chair, and said in a low voice, "Who is that petrifying memento of mortality? that fearful representative of every evil propensity concentrated?"

Clarentine

Clarentine started, and asked whom he meant?

“O, trust me,” cried he, “I don’t know her name, and I almost wonder I should *wish* to know it: but tell me, the antique personage who just came in—who is she?”

“Do you wish to be introduced to her?”

“If that is a necessary ceremony, yes, certainly. I wish to be well with every member of this family.”

Clarentine then beckoned to Sophia, and in the same low voice said, “Mr. Eltham wishes to be presented to Mrs. Harrington, will you undertake the office?”

“With all my heart,” answered Sophia, “I have an excellent memory, and remember the whole of what Lord Welwyn said yesterday upon a similar occasion, not one word of which I will omit.”

“Oh, the D—l!” exclaimed Eltham, “you’ll ruin me! Talk of prodigality and dissipation to such a stern old lady as that? You’ll undo me!”

“Surely,” said Sophia, “you cannot expect me to be more lenient than your uncle!”

“And

“ And why not ? ” cried he laughing, “ Lord Welwyn himself believed not one word he uttered ; he saw I was captivated by the sight of so much beauty ; ” bowing to them both, “ and fearful of the consequences, described me in such uncharitable terms merely to preserve you from being too much fascinated by my extraordinary merit.”

“ Lord Welwyn was very good,” said Sophia, “ but really I don’t think we were in any danger.”

“ Ah, believe me, you deceive yourselves. I never met with a woman yet, (such only as that good lady,” looking at Mrs. Harrington, “ excepted) who did not think me irresistible ! ”

“ Or, at least,” said Sophia drily, “ the quintessence of *modesty* ! ”

“ Aye,” cried he, “ that is one of my principal excellencies. I carry it even to an excess, and am accused by many people of absolute *bashfulness*. But,” continued he, “ if I am not mistaken I had best depart, for your friend there,” again looking at Mrs. Harrington, “ seems to regard me with no friendly aspect. It is astonishing how all these ancient ladies
tremble;

tremble, the moment they see me speak to a pretty woman !”

So saying, he looked round for his hat, and was upon the point of taking leave, when Lady Julia called him back.

“ Mr. Eltham,” cried she smiling, “ will you undertake to obtain my father’s leave for me to go to Lynton fair this evening ? Tell him Lady Delmington has given her daughters permission to go with Sir Edgar, and intreat him to allow me to accompany them.”

Eltham promised to perform this commission, and bowing respectfully to Lady Delmington, took Sir Edgar under the arm, and left the room. The Chevalier rose at the same time, and followed them out.

“ Who is that bold looking young man ?” said Mrs. Harrington, the moment he was gone.

“ My cousin, Madam,” answered Lady Julia gravely

Mrs. Harrington, a little disconcerted, changed the subject, and soon after, telling Lady Delmington she wished to speak to her, they went together into another room.

On

On their return, a long contention ensued between Mrs. Harrington, Harriet, and Sophia, concerning the projected party to Lytton. Not chusing to attack Lady Julia upon that subject, yet extremely averse to the scheme's taking place, she had called Lady Delmington out of the room for the sole purpose of urging her to counteract it; her Ladyship having given her positive sanction to it, however, said she could not now recall it; but contented herself with promising, at Mrs. Harrington's earnest persuasion, to oppose Clarentine's going with them.

It was on this prohibition's being pronounced, the two sisters, but Sophia in particular, gaining courage from her mother's passive silence, ventured to plead warmly in Clarentine's behalf; Lady Julia also joined to theirs her own entreaties, but in vain. Mrs. Harrington said, it might be very proper for her Ladyship, who was related to Mr. Eltham, and the two Miss Delmingtons, who would be accompanied by their brother, to engage in such an expedition: but, that for Clarentine, as there was no married lady with them, as Mr. Eltham was almost a stranger
to

to her, and Sir Edgar by no means an eligible guardian for her, she thought it would be highly blameable in Lady Delmington to suffer her to go.

Clarentine, though she was by no means the dupe of this affected tenderness for her reputation, was at once too gentle, and too rational, to think it worth while to enter into any argument upon the subject; but thanking Lady Julia, and her two cousins, for their kindness in wishing her to be of their party, said she should return to *Mont-Repos* before the gentlemen came back, that no questions might be asked, and spend the evening quietly with Madame d'Arzele.

Lady Delmington, upon this, gave her a look of affectionate approbation; and Mrs. Harrington, with an air of triumph, told her she could not do better.

A little before six, the two gentlemen arrived on horseback, attended by a servant driving Lord Welwyn's *sociable*, which had been sent for the accommodation of the young ladies. Sophia, the instant they reached the door, ran out to say they were all ready; and the next

minute, Lady Julia, Harriet, and the little Emma appeared.

Eltham, as he handed them in, whilst Sir Edgar was talking at the window to his mother, enquired eagerly after Clarentine. She had been gone near half an hour: but Lady Julia thinking it best to prevent the exclamations this intelligence would give rise to, till they were beyond the hearing of Mrs. Harrington, affected for some time not to hear him; and at length, on being urged with redoubled earnestness, carelessly answered, "she is gone on before, but we may perhaps overtake her at the end of the avenue. Drive on, Francis," speaking to the servant.

"No, no, stop!" exclaimed Eltham, "you deceive us, Lady Julia. Had she been in the avenue we should have met her as we rode up. Where is she? You cannot possibly mean to set off without her!"

"I assure you," cried Lady Julia, rather impatiently, "she is not in the house. Suffer us to go on, and I will tell you more."

Eltham

Eltham reluctantly acquiesced, and before Sir Edgar had finished his conversation, or had had leisure to remark that Clarentine was not of their party, the carriage moved on.

The first moment Lady Julia seemed disposed to listen to him, Eltham renewed his interrogations.

“Why so much mystery upon this subject?” cried he, “why were you so averse to answering me sooner?”

“Because,” replied Lady Julia, “before Mrs. Harrington, who was observing us from the windows, it would have been highly improper, since as it was she who prevented Clarentine’s going with us, your animadversions would have exasperated her extremely.”

This account brought on an innumerable train of further inquiries, as well from Mr. Eltham, as Sir Edgar, whose astonishment at such an act of authority could only be exceeded by his concern for the unsupported Clarentine, and his indignation against the arbitrary proceedings of Mrs. Harrington.

“Bitterly shall we all have cause to lament,” cried he, “the hour that first

M 2 introduced

introduced that woman into our family! From its having been one of the most united and happy upon earth, she will render it the most turbulent and wretched; my mother suffers herself to be made her tool, and ever at variance with some individual or other amongst us, nothing in future can be expected but an incessant repetition of paltry wranglings in public, or of determined tyranny in private."

"Well, my dear Edgar," cried Sophia, surprised at the unusual acrimony with which he spoke, "however true all this may be, you have less reason to complain than any of us, since, rarely as you are now at home, your sufferings must be trifling indeed compared to ours."

"'Ah!'" thought Edgar, "neither is it for myself I feel! My concern is wholly for the defenceless, and too submissive Clarentine, who being the chief object against whom all Mrs. Harrington's malice is levelled, must, consequently, be liable to far greater mortifications than any one else!"

Distressing to him as was this idea, he scarcely rallied spirits sufficient to speak again during the whole evening. Eltham and

Sophia occasionally addressed each other, and attempted to animate the conversation, but unassisted as they were, their endeavours failed; and this, as most other concerted *parties of pleasure* do, ended in lassitude, insipidity, and disappointment.

As they were returning, a scheme occurred to Eltham which was unanimously agreed to, the moment he mentioned it. This was, to call, in their way to Delmington, at *Mont-Repos*, and there to take up Clarentine, and carry her on with them. Sir Edgar was so revived by this proposal, which the unpleasant train of reflections he had been thrown into had effectually prevented *his* thinking of, that he no sooner heard it started, than, galloping forward, without stopping to utter a single word, he left them to prepare Clarentine for their approach.

On his entrance into the room where she was sitting, he found her alone, and to his inexpressible astonishment, practising upon the harp a very beautiful composition, which (among many others Madame d'Arzele had privately taught her in the course of the winter) she had lately begun learning. He paused a moment at

the door, in silent amazement; and then eagerly advancing, at the very time she first looked up and perceived him, he exclaimed, "My dearest Clarentine! how do I honour that activity of mind, which thus leads you, though in secrecy and silence, to cultivate those talents you are endowed with. Well might you, who so well know how to employ every hour, be resigned to the harsh prohibition you received: but tell me, how are *we* to acquire equal submission? You know not with what sincerity we have lamented a deprivation we had so little reason to expect."

Clarentine, though surprized at the earnestness of this address, chose not to disclaim the compliment it conveyed, well knowing that was always looked upon as a challenge to continue in the same strain. She therefore, with her accustomed modest simplicity, answered, "You were all very good to think so much about me, and I can assure you I was extremely concerned myself not to be of your party. But pray Edgar, where have you left Lady Julia and your sisters? What brings you here alone?"

Sir

Sir Edgar had scarcely time to acquaint her with the motive of her visit, before Etham, Lady Julia, and her companions appeared. The bustle their arrival occasioned soon brought down Madame d'Arzele from her nursery; and then being extremely pressed to sit down a few minutes, Lady Julia, sent home the *sociable*, every body declaring with one voice that as the evening was so beautiful, it would be much pleasanter to walk than ride the remainder of the way.

Chairs being now placed round the table, the three ladies, who last came in, produced, to the great amusement of the whole company, a number of little toys they had purchased as *fairings* for Madame d'Arzele's children. Then turning to Clarentine, Lady Julia with a smile said, as she presented to her a small silver anchor, "This, my dear girl, is the only thing I could meet with that seemed to me to be so well adapted to you. Knowing your passion for sailors, I thought an anchor, as well because it is the emblem of hope, as the representative of that, on which depends the safety of your fa-

avourites, might appear of some value to you. Tell me, did I judge right?"

"Yes, perfectly," answered Clarentine, receiving it with a grateful smile; "you could not have bestowed upon me any thing, which, for the reasons you mention, I should have thought more precious. In remembrance of you, and of Mr. Somerset, for whose sake chiefly I am so partial to sailors, I will preserve it most carefully."

"Oh, how do I lament," cried Sophia, "since imagination can give so much to whatever reminds us in the remotest degree of an absent friend, my stupidity in not looking out for something that might, during your stay at Sidmouth, have brought to your recollection the inhabitants of Delmington. *A whirligig*, for instance, could never have failed having that effect with regard to Edgar, and—

"How," interrupted Lady Julia, "*a whirligig!* and why so?"

"Bless me! don't you know? Why Edgar, as Clarentine has justly remarked, has a mutability of disposition, and an uncertainty of temper that cannot be so properly

properly represented by any other symbol."

Clarentine looking up at that moment, and observing in Sir Edgar's countenance, notwithstanding the faint attempt he made to smile, an expression of embarrassment and consciousness, instantly started a new subject, and gave a different turn to the conversation.

Having sat with Madame d'Arzele about half an hour, and being fearful of exciting Mrs. Harrington's ever ready censure by a longer stay, they now all rose to depart. Lady Julia and the two Miss Delmingtons took a very affectionate leave of Madame d'Arzele; the former entreated she might often hear from her, and repeatedly urged her to make her absence as short as possible. Then leaving a thousand kind messages for the children, she led the way and hurried down stairs.

In the entrance they were accosted by the Chevalier, who having spent the evening with Lord Welwyn, was just returned. He insisted upon escorting the ladies home, though already so well at-

tended; and accordingly set out with them.

Dividing themselves into separate parties, each of the gentlemen, either according to inclination or necessity, attached himself to a different lady. Sir Edgar, wholly influenced in his choice, by the *latter* motive, walked by the side of Lady Julia, who, at intervals, with much difficulty, started a momentary conversation; but more generally, suffered him quietly to indulge the taciturn gravity, into which he had once more relapsed. Immediately behind them followed Clarentine and Eltham, the direct contrasts of their two leaders; all the conversation between them, proceeding from the gentleman, and all the desire of silence from the lady. Harriet and Emma, both spiritless and fatigued, walked near them; and last of all, came Sophia, who with unabated animation was gaily flirting with the Chevalier, and seemed to be the only one present, that was perfectly satisfied with the partner who had fallen to her lot.

Herself excepted therefore, nobody appeared, when at length, the moment of separating

separating drew near, to lament it. The gentlemen, after seeing them to the end of the avenue, turned back, and left their companions, trembling at the idea of meeting Mrs. Harrington, (for it was now near ten o'clock) to frame the best excuses they could for the length of their absence.

Though in her expressions of open disapprobation, that lady, when they appeared, was not so severe as she had been the preceding night, yet her reception of them, upon the whole, was very little pleasanter: that she did not indeed break out into absolute reproaches, could alone be attributed to the expectation she had, that Lady Delmington would do it herself, on account of little Emma, whose usual hour of going to rest being now considerably past, had consequently rendered her extremely uneasy at their delay.

Lady Julia, anxious to save her friends, took the whole blame upon herself, the moment Lady Delmington's mild, but serious, rebuke began. She said nothing of their visit to *Mont-Repos*, leaving it to be supposed, they met with Clarentine,

by accident : but accused herself of having been the sole cause of detaining them so long at Lyfton, and interceded most earnestly for a general pardon.

Such a pleader, even Mrs. Harrington chose not to withstand. All anger therefore was soon forgotten, and an unwonted degree of serenity and chearfulness prevailed during the remainder of the evening.

C H A P. VI.

THE following day, till near dinner time, Clarentine was busily employed in preparing for her journey, that she might be ready the next morning, when Madamed'Arzele, who must necessarily drive past the door, called to take her up.

As this occupation, therefore, had kept her in her own room so many hours, Lady Julia, who was desirous of having a little quiet conversation with her before she
went,

went, took the first opportunity, after they arose from table, of proposing to her a short walk in the garden. Clarentine willingly agreed to it, and they quitted the room together.

The extreme heat of the weather, however, soon drove them in, and compelled them once more to return to the parlour; where whilst Harriet read aloud, the rest sat down to work, or draw, near the window.

The clock had just struck ten, and they were upon the point of sitting down to supper, when a tremendous clap of thunder, preceded by several vivid flashes of lightning, startled the whole party, and almost shook the gothic mansion to its foundation. Lady Delmington, though the uncommon fultriness of the day had taught her to expect it, was filled, notwithstanding, with consternation and terror, when she reflected upon the danger to which her son might be exposed, returning through a woody country on horseback, in the midst of such a storm.

For near three hours, during which it continued at intervals to rage with unabated violence, neither Lady Delmington

ton

ton nor her two daughters, quitted the parlour. Clarentine would gladly have remained with them, but her aunt, apprehending that if Emma awoke she would be frightened, begged she would go up, and sit with her. Lady Julia followed, and for some time continued with her; but at length, growing extremely sleepy, and not being infected with any fears herself, she bade her good night, and retired to her own room.

It was near two o'clock before Sir Edgar came home; he seemed extremely surpris'd to find his mother and sisters up at such an hour; but when he heard the cause, though he derided their alarm, he also thanked them for their anxiety, and besought them earnestly not to remain below a moment longer. Lady Delmington, fatigued and harrassed as she was, in mind, as well as body, readily followed his advice, and rejoicing in his safety, called to her daughters, and left the room. Harriet immediately joined her: but just as Sophia reached the door, her brother brought her back by a motion of his head, and leading her to the table, said—

“ Sophia,

“ Sophia, I am the happiest fellow upon earth ! Behold,” taking out his purse, and shaking it as he spoke, “ what propitious Fortune has sent me. I have been playing to-night, and in less than two hours, won near an hundred guineas ! to-morrow I redeem my watch, my books, and every thing I had parted with.”

“ A very honourable method,” said Sophia, drily, “ of acquiring money for such a purpose !”

“ Nay, do not chide me,” cried he ; “ I resisted playing, till being the only one that sat out, I could resist no longer. Some guardian angel, at length, prompted me to the deed—some blessed spirit, that saw, and pitied my distress !”

“ I should have thought,” cried Sophia, “ that angels and spirits had been wiser ! This lowers my opinion of their understanding extremely ; I am glad, however, for your sake, they have so little brains ; and heartily wish you good night.”

“ Stop one minute,” cried he, laughing, “ you must inform Clarentine of this event. Why did she not sit up with you ?”

“ Because

“ Because perhaps, she had a *presentiment* of all the extravagancies she might hear.”

“ She is really gone to bed, then?”

“ I imagine so; but am not sure.”

Sir Edgar said no more, and the next minute Sophia left him.

As soon as he concluded she had reached her own room, he cautiously directed his steps towards the gallery, at the end of which Clarentine slept, and certain of not being heard, as no one else occupied that part of the house, knocked at the door. No answer being returned, and no sound, save that of the thunder still rolling at a distance, reaching his ears, he began to fear she was actually gone to bed. Determined to make one more trial, however, he waited a few minutes, and then knocking again, heard her, at length, in a tone of terror and affright, ask who was there?

“ Me,” answered Edgar—“ are you dressed? Will you come down?”

“ Come down?” repeated she, “ at this time of night?”

“ It is not so late as you imagine,” answered he, “ I will not detain you five minutes:

minutes: but I must see, I must speak to you."

"Indeed, Edgar, you cannot—what will your mother say to me for leaving Emma?"

"Emma is asleep, is she not?"

"Yes."

"Then you *must* come. My mother is in the parlour, and sent me to call you."

In any other situation of mind, Sir Edgar would have started at the bare idea of uttering such a falsehood: but his head was not at that time entirely his own. Flushed with drinking, and elevated with success, his powers of reflection were totally suspended, and he scarcely felt conscious himself of what he was doing.

Clarentine, in the innocence of her heart, suspected no deceit, but anxious to obey Lady Delmington's supposed summons, softly opened her door, and said she was ready to follow him.

He eagerly seized her extended hand, and as they proceeded, asked her, how long she had been sitting there alone?

"Not

“Not so long, perhaps,” answered she, “as the horrors of the night made me suppose: but yet a sufficient time to have rendered me quite chill and comfortless.”

“Did you bestow a thought upon *me*,” said he, “whilst you sat there? Did you participate in my mother’s apprehensions for *my* safety? Tell me, dearest Clarentine—for *your* pity, *your* anxiety would more than recompense me for any dangers!”

“I often wished you were at home,” answered she, a little startled at the earnestness of his manner, “but did not imagine that to be exposed to any danger of this sort could, for a moment, appal such a spirit as yours.”

They had by this time reached the parlour, which Clarentine perceiving to be empty, shrunk back from, and fearfully exclaimed—“What is it you have done, Sir Edgar?—where is Lady Delmington?”

“Be not alarmed,” cried he, still endeavouring to draw her forward, “indeed you have nothing to apprehend. I have
deceived

deceived you, it is true, with regard to my mother's being here: but when you hear my reasons, I am sure you will forgive me. Come in then—if, as I said before, only for five minutes."

"O, no, no, no!" cried she, struggling to get from him, "not for an instant! I would not stay, I would not listen to you to-night for the world!"

"You *must* hear me," returned he, compelling her to advance, "to-morrow you will be gone; this, therefore, is my only time."

Then, seizing the key of the door, and turning it with precipitation in the lock, he drew it out and put it in his pocket.

Clarentine, aghast at this sight, and looking at him a moment, with mingled astonishment and indignation, forcibly snatched away her hand, and burst into tears.

"Oh! my Clarentine!" exclaimed he, dropping on one knee before her, "what is it you fear? Why this distress? Am I grown hateful to you? Am I no longer the Edgar you formerly trusted with such implicit confidence—you called your brother, your friend? Oh! have you forgot
the

the happy time when mutually pleased to be together—”

“ O rise, rise, Sir Edgar!” interrupted Clarentine angrily, “ this is not a moment to talk to me in such language; neither would you expose me to the aspersions this ill timed interview will bring upon me, were you *indeed* the friend you would be thought! Release me instantly therefore, or you will drive me to desperation!”

So saying, she suddenly disengaged herself, and flew towards the bell which she was going to pull with violence, when he ran to her, again seized both her hands, and called out—

“ Forbear, dear Clarentine, I beseech you, and patiently consent to hear me; your efforts to escape would all be vain, since no one in the house could hear that bell, were you even to ring it. Its sound reaches no further than the kitchen, and that has long been deserted.”

“ Well, then, Sir,” said Clarentine, with a dignified calmness that totally overawed him, “ for the last time, I hope, that I shall ever be compelled to listen to you again—speak—”

Then

Then moving towards the table, she coldly seated herself before it, and leaning her head upon her hands, prepared to hear him without interruption.

Disconcerted, and irresolute, he paused a few moments, and then drawing the key from his pocket, presented it to her, and said—

“ I commit myself, dearest Clarentine, to your generosity. Take this key, and—if you can have the cruelty, leave me this moment !”

Clarentine, much softened, received it in silence, and for some time retained it in her hand, without having the courage to rise. At length, however, she went towards the door, and said—

“ You must be sensible yourself, Sir Edgar, of the impropriety of a meeting so clandestine as this. I cannot therefore stay : but if you will tell Sophia what you have to impart to me, she will, after I get to Sidmouth, write to—”

“ Cruel, inhuman girl !” interrupted he impetuously, “ Is *this* all you will grant me ? Are you determined, by flying me so precipitately, to make me repent my folly in giving you the power ? Oh
Clarentine !

Clarentine ! I thought better of the softness of your disposition, or I had never trusted you with the means of quitting me, till I had *compelled* you to hear me !”

“ Good God !” exclaimed Clarentine, holding the door half open in her hand, “ what is it you would say to me ?”

“ What I cannot, any longer, persuade myself to conceal ; what you must already, in part, suspect ; what I am irrevocably determined shortly to publish to the whole world !”

“ Heavens !” exclaimed Clarentine, trembling, and almost breathless, “ what is it you mean ?”

“ To consecrate my future life to you,” answered he, with vehemence, “ to proclaim aloud my fervent adoration of you, to reverence, to love, to cherish you to my latest breath.”

“ Hush, for shame, Sir !” cried Clarentine, colouring with resentment, “ reserve these protestations for *Lady Julia Leyburne* !”

And then with a look expressive of all the contempt she felt, she would have hurried out of the room.

“ This

“ This is too much ! ” exclaimed Sir Edgar, in a voice rendered almost inarticulate by his own emotion. “ Dear Clarentine ! lovely, yet proud, unmerciful Clarentine ! I cannot endure such contemptuous disdain ! Talk not to me of Lady Julia Leyburne—By heaven, I swear—”

“ Fie, fie, Sir Edgar ! ” interrupted Clarentine, “ this is unmanly, dishonourable, worthless ! Lady Julia, it is no secret, is destined to be yours ; she is amiable, she is good, and, above all, she is my friend ! Imagine not then, I will quietly submit to the insult you would do us both, by pledging your perjured faith to me, at the very time, (and, with your own consent) your marriage is negotiating with her !—You wrong us equally—you degrade yourself for ever in my opinion, and make me blush to remember the regard I once felt for you ! ”

“ Oh, my Clarentine, condemn me not unheard ! ” cried he, again withholding her, “ the cruelty of my situation is such, as, for a time, to render dissimulation absolutely necessary. I never gave any but a tacit consent to the union proposed ; I
never

never attempted to seduce Lady Julia's affection; I have made no promises; signed no articles; in short, have preserved myself as free, as, till I am of age, I have any hopes of being. My mother, had she suspected my attachment to you, would have removed you from my sight; would, perhaps for ever, have torn you from me!"

Here, while the door stood open, the sudden appearance of a light in the hall dismayed the trembling Clarentine, who looking towards it, uttered the name of "Mrs. Harrington," with a faint scream, and gasping for breath, caught hold of the back of a chair for support.

Meanwhile, Sir Edgar, who during the latter part of this conversation had again sunk upon his knee before her, abruptly started up, though not in time to escape the notice of Mrs. Harrington. She now entered, pale with rage, her tall figure wrapt in a long white dressing-gown, and her feeble lamp, flashing an unsteady light at intervals across her face.

"I have *proof* then now," cried she, as soon as she was able to speak, in a voice that made poor Clarentine shudder,

"ocular

“ocular proof of what I have so long apprehended! Thy arts, vile wretch,” addressing Clarentine, “have fully succeeded, and that infatuated boy, seduced by their infernal influence, has fallen into the snare thou hast prepared for him! Go!” continued she, furiously stamping as she spoke, “Go, deceitful Syren! and never may I be blasted by thy sight again!”

All the irascible passions in Edgar’s nature were roused by this unwomanly attack. Trembling with indignation; fearless of consequences, and rendered desperate by opposition, he fiercely addressed Mrs. Harrington, and said—

“By what right, by what authority, Madam, do you usurp the privilege of speaking to any of this family in such opprobrious terms? Clarentine is under my mother’s protection, is under *mine*; and neither *shall*, nor *deserves* to be insulted by language so outrageous!”

“Grant me patience, heaven!” cried Mrs. Harrington, with encreasing vehemence! “Grant me patience to bear this dauntless assurance! Mad boy! be silent, and instantly remove that creature from

my fight, or I will not answer for the extremities to which my abhorrence of her may drive me!"

Clarentine, who long since had crept towards the door with a view of making her escape, but had hitherto been prevented by Sir Edgar, now, in a low and faltering voice, said, "For mercy; for pity's sake! Sir Edgar, let me pass!"

"Fear nothing, my love," cried he tenderly, "are you not with me? then, who will *dare* molest you? Be comforted, my own Clarentine! be reassured; and trust me, what I have so solemnly sworn, I never will retract—the faith I have so voluntarily pledged, I never will recall!"

"Alas!" cried she mournfully, "that faith I wish not to accept—that oath I wish not should be binding! You have ruined, you have destroyed me! My reputation is gone for ever, and I care not now what becomes of me, or how great the shame that awaits me!"

During this time, Mrs. Harrington, finding her power by no means equal to the task she had undertaken, had precipitately left the room, almost unnoticed
by

by the two miserable beings she left behind her.

“ You renounce me then !” cried Edgar reproachfully ; “ now, at the very moment I wish to make my devotion to you public, you coldly, unfeelingly renounce me, and reject my proffered faith ! Oh, Clarentine ! I had a right to expect more sensibility from you ! I had a right, when willing myself to hazard every thing in order to obtain you, to expect some support from your own firmness !”

“ The moment you have chosen, Sir Edgar,” returned Clarentine, “ to make your partiality known to me ; the ties that already, in honour, bind you—the opposition of your family, and a thousand other reasons, all combine, to determine me at once to put an end to your hopes. Neither reproaches, importunity, nor perseverance, shall ever make me yours ; nor shall any circumstances, nor any time, induce me to alter my resolution, since the remembrance of the scene you have involved me in can never be effaced from my mind, nor the artifice and duplicity imputed to me ever be wiped off from my character ! Make not, therefore, any

attempt to change your mother's plan; deny not your engagement, insult not Lady Julia, nor offend her father; for I here firmly protest to you, that were they to-morrow to release you; were you privileged to-morrow to offer me your hand, after what has passed, nothing on earth should prevail upon me to accept it! Justify my conduct, as far as it will bear justification, in this affair: you may do it with truth and honour, and I will thank you for the deed: but when that is over, think of me no more!"

Sir Edgar, thunderstruck at this speech, with an air of mingled pride and sorrow, instantly dropped her hand; and turning silently from her, began walking about the room, in great agitation, without once looking up, or trusting himself to speak to her again.

Clarentine paused a moment at the door to observe him. Her heart almost reproached her for the sufferings she had inflicted; she sighed, and still involuntarily lingered, till hearing a noise above, she softly whispered a parting benediction, and hastened away.

She

She had not been gone three minutes, when, accompanied by Mrs. Harrington, who had been up stairs on purpose to call her, Lady Delmington entered the room.

Sir Edgar started at their sight, and would have rushed past them without speaking, but his mother gently, yet half-reproachfully calling him back, said—

“Edgar, why should you avoid me? If you have done no wrong, you can fear no remonstrances; and if you *have*, you are too candid not to hear them with patience!”

Soothed, and calmed, by the mildness of this address, Sir Edgar respectfully approached her, took her hand, and pressing it to his lips, said—

“Ah! dear Madam, spare me to-night! my heart has already been tortured beyond endurance! I am ill, I am extremely disturbed. Suffer me then to leave you now, and in the morning I will attend you as early as you please.”

“Upon that condition, my son,” answered Lady Delmington, “I willingly release you. Go, my dear boy, and may heaven restore you to happiness and tranquillity.”

So saying, she put into his hand a light ; remarked with grief the emotion still depicted in his countenance, and after accompanying him to his own door, took leave of Mrs. Harrington and went back to her room.

C H A P. VII.

BEFORE six o'clock the next morning, Mrs. Harrington rang for her woman, and sent her to summon Harriet and Sophia to her bed-side.

The instant this message was delivered, Sophia, extremely provoked at being thus disturbed, exclaimed, " Has your mistress no conscience, Mrs. Sutton ? Does she really believe, that after going to bed at past two o'clock we can rise again at six ? Pray tell her it is impossible to think of it ; close the curtain and leave the room."

Then turning round again, she declared she would send no other answer.

Applying

Applying next to Harriet—"Well Miss," said the maid, "will *you* attend my mistress? She told me she had something very particular to say to you, and unless you go to her, she will most likely come to you."—

"Was ever any thing so tormenting!" cried Harriet, rubbing her eyes—"What can she want with us? Sophy, do get up, and step to her a moment; you can come back and lay down again afterwards, you know."

"Very much obliged to you!" answered Sophy, "the proposal is particularly friendly! Ay, good Mrs. Sutton, pray go away and don't distract us any longer."

"So then," cried Mrs. Sutton, "neither of you will rise?" "Yes, yes!" answered Harriet, peevishly, "*I* will.—Go, and tell her so, therefore; and for heaven sake, don't let her come to us!"

"No," said Sophia, "I beg you won't; for bad habits are not so soon got rid of."

In a very few minutes, Harriet, in her night-cap and dressing-gown, was at Mrs. Harrington's bed-side.

Raising herself up the moment she saw her, "Fine doings, child," cried she, "in the house last night! Pray did you hear no noise about three o'clock?"

"No, Madam," answered Harriet, much surprised at this beginning, "what was the matter?"

Mrs. Harrington then entered into an exaggerated detail of all that had passed; spoke of Clarentine in terms of opprobrium the most illiberal; coarsely and unfeelingly accused Lady Delmington of being the indirect cause of her son's ruin, and ended by protesting she would never cease urging her, till Clarentine was finally banished the house.

Harriet, amazed at this recital, was, for some minutes after the loquacious speaker paused, incapable of uttering a word. At length however, feeling some concern for her brother, she said—

"And what became of poor Edgar when he saw you?"

"What became of him? Why, he behaved with a degree of insolence, I never shall forgive; openly espoused the cause of the wretch who has misguided him; and set my remonstrances completely at defiance.

defiance. Your mother, however, has given me great hopes, she will no more permit her henceforward to reside here; she leaves the house in two hours, decidedly, I flatter myself, for life. Go not near her, before she sets off; and give the same caution to Sophia."

Harriet, without making any comment upon what she had heard, was then leaving the room; but at the door Mrs. Harrington called her back.

"Stop, child, stop!" cried she, "you have been told of the projected marriage between your worthless brother and Lady Julia Leyburne? I do not despair yet of seeing it accomplished: but for that purpose she must be kept in profound ignorance of all that has past. That wretched girl cannot infatuate him for ever! If we can but remove her entirely from his sight, place her totally beyond his reach, I have not the least doubt of bringing him to his senses. Go then, and be careful you say nothing before Lady Julia that can lead to a discovery!"

Harriet promised obedience, and was at length suffered to depart.

When she got back to her own room, she found Sophia asleep. Her eagerness to impart the wonders she had heard allowed her not, however, to let her rest undisturbed; the instant she reached the bed-side, throwing the curtains wide open, she exclaimed—

“O, Sophy! I have such news to tell you!”

“News!” said Sophia, yawning, “Is the dear old Harrington going?”

“No, no—but Edgar—you’ll never believe what I have to say about him!”

“Has he fold his coat?” cried Sophia—“pawnd his shirt?”

“Nonsense! what an absurd question!”

“Not so absurd, perhaps, as you may imagine! but tell me, what *has* he done?”

“Why last night,” said Harriet, sitting down upon the bed, and assuming all the significant importance of an old village-gossip, “when every body else in the house was asleep, he and Clarentine were discovered together in the parlour.”

“What?” interrupted Sophia, eagerly starting up, “What did you say?”

“That in the middle of the night,” returned Harriet, “Mrs. Harrington surprised

prised Edgar at Clarentine's feet! that in consequence of this, Clarentine is no more to be permitted to return here, nor even before she goes, to be seen or spoken to by any body!"

"What abominable scandal have you been picking up!" cried Sophia, glowing with indignation—"For shame, Harriet! How can you repeat, with an appearance of so much glee, such paltry tittle tattle? I don't believe a single word of the whole story; and notwithstanding Mrs. Harrington, shall get up and go to poor Clarentine directly.

"You had better not," said Harriet drily, "she strictly forbade it, and ordered me to come and tell you so."

"Till mama forbids it," said Sophia, beginning in haste to rise, "I think myself at liberty to do as I please. If *you* can so easily renounce a near relation, a friend, *I* cannot, nay, *I will not?*"

"So then," said Harriet, "you believe this is entirely my invention?"

"No, I don't, Clarentine and Edgar may have been seen together; may in the middle of the night, disturbed by the thunder, have met in the parlour; but I

never persuade myself it was any thing except chance that occasioned it. She is a modest, an excellent girl; and would no more consent to a private affignation with him, at such improper hours, than she would fly!"

During this little dialogue, having dressed herself with the utmost expedition, she was moving towards the door, when it was suddenly opened, and Lady Delmington, pale and breathless, appeared—

"My dear girls," cried she, throwing herself into a chair, "your brother—my unhappy Edgar, is ill—very ill!"

The two girls started, and flew to her.

"Dear Madam," cried Sophia, "have you sent for any body? Oh, let me go to him!"

"No, no, my love!" exclaimed her mother, alarmed at this proposal, "his disorder may be infectious! go not near his room till the physician has seen him; I have sent for one from Lyfton."

"How did you know he was ill, Madam?" said Harriet, "have you been to him?"

"Yes, I sent my woman up, a quarter of an hour ago, to desire he would let me
speak

“speak to him before breakfast; she brought me word down he was unable to rise, and to all appearance was extremely ill. I instantly hastened to him, and found him in a burning fever, motionless, and quite insensible! The housekeeper is sitting by him during my absence, and I am now impatiently expecting the arrival of the physician.”

“Alas! dear Madam,” cried Sophia in a voice of supplication, “and are we, in addition to our concern on Edgar’s account, to be so utterly forbidden the sight of Clarentine before she goes? Is it true she has so deeply offended you?”

“My Sophia,” answered Lady Delmington, “she has less offended than grieved me. I know not how to act with regard to her, how to dispose of, how to behave to her. She has involved us all in the cruellest perplexity; made your brother miserable; and sullied her own character. Yet, still I cannot forget she was your father’s niece; cannot forget her youth, her inexperience; nor the blame I myself deserve, for having exposed her to a trial she was so unequal to. Where I can place her, heaven only knows!

knows! If you very much wish it, however, you may see, and take leave of her, though I cannot."

Sophia, in token of gratitude for this permission, silently kissed her mother's hand, and ran out of the room.

On entering that of Clarentine, she was surprised to find it already deserted, and with much vexation was turning back, when, as she passed the dressing table, a sealed note, directed to her, caught her eye. She took it up, and breaking it open, found in it these words:

MISS SOPHIA DELMINGTON.

"Before my dearest Sophia reads this note, I shall have left the house. I cannot encounter disgrace, nor am I sufficiently hardened to defy contempt. Of all I leave behind me, you alone do I dare address, for you alone will credit me perhaps, when I solemnly plead, *not guilty!* Appearances may be against me: but the heart of my Sophia, I am persuaded, never will. Think of me, therefore, as kindly as you can, and write to me if you are allowed. Adieu. Heaven bless you!"

This

This unaffected note, in which no attempt was made to excite compassion, no weak lamentations poured forth, and no bitterness of complaint indulged, gave Sophia the utmost pleasure; and would have been alone sufficient, had she not already in her own mind exculpated her friend, to have convinced her that the person who could write so temperately at such a moment, must be supported by an internal consciousness of rectitude, and a firm persuasion of her own innocence.

Meeting Emma upon the stairs, she asked her how long Clarentine had been gone?

“Not a quarter of an hour,” answered the child; “Madame d’Arzele came for her sooner than she expected: but as she never had her cloaths off the whole night, and only lay down a little while on the outside of the bed, she was ready in a moment.”

Then lowering her voice with an air of mystery, she added,

“I don’t know what was the matter, but she cried sadly as she was going away, and when I wished her good by, held me
in

in her arms, and kissed me, without being able to speak a single word."

Sophia, extremely affected by this account, scarcely had power to refrain from tears herself. The character of Clarentine, "jealous in honour," and full of sensibility as it was, she knew too well, not to feel deeply for the distress of heart she must endure, when quitting the house under imputations so disgraceful, unsupported by the soothing expectation of ever being entirely absolved, and even uncertain whether her return to it would ever be permitted.

Yet, notwithstanding the conviction her note brought to the mind of Sophia, she ventured not to communicate it to her mother, since, to one who believed her guilty, it might appear too much to border upon a spirit of independence and pride, moderate as it was; and since nothing, she was certain, but the extreme humility and the deepest contrition could now gain her any indulgence. For this reason, therefore, she carefully concealed its contents, and deferred answering it till evening, when being released by Harriet from her attendance upon her brother, she

she shut herself up in her own room, and wrote as follows :

MISS DELMINGTON.

“ You judge rightly, dearest Clarentine, when you say, *my heart can never be against you!* What are *appearances*, compared to a life blameless as yours has been for 17 years? Such a life ought alone to establish confidence, and preclude suspicion. As for me, you will I hope easily credit me, when I tell you, I believed you innocent from the moment I heard the charge brought against you; and were the whole world to raise its voice in your accusation, till its authority was rendered unquestionable by *positive proof*, I never should put any faith in its report. Why should an unblemished reputation, a fair and spotless character be coveted, if, upon trial, neither will avail to shield us from injustice? Those who have cheerfully practised all the duties of their station, who for years, have possessed, and merited the approbation and esteem of all who knew them, deserve not surely, that on the first equivocal action of their lives, *surprise* should be converted into *doubt*—and *doubt* into *determined condemnation!*

“ But

“ But let me not dwell longer upon this ungrateful subject. We understand each other too well for it to be necessary, *I* should lose time in telling you how little I suspect you; or *you* should spend yours in useless vindication; I ask for none—I require none: but I should be rejoiced above measure, were you to write to me such an account, plain, simple, and undisguised, of this strange business, as I could safely shew my mother. You know her, my Clarentine; you know how open her liberal mind is to conviction; how ready her generous heart is to forget and pardon. That she certainly is, at present, uncommonly incensed, I will not pretend to conceal from you. Had the circumstances of the case been even less suspicious than they were, the pains that *have* been, and hourly *are* taken, to prejudice her against you, could hardly have failed in their effect; since, as you will believe, no malicious aggravations are spared, no unfavourable interpretations omitted, that can conduce towards effectually eradicating you from her heart. Yet fear not, my own Clarentine—that heart still whispers many kind things

things to her in your behalf; and truth and innocence *must*, in the end, prevail!

“ You may wonder perhaps, and naturally, that for the detail I solicit, I apply not to Edgar himself. Blame him not however, too rashly; nor, for one moment, believe so ill of him, as to imagine, he would have neglected doing you all the justice, and making you all the reparation in his power, had he been in a situation to have undertaken the explanation I ask—Alas! my dear Clarentine—I know not even if, from *him*, it can *ever* be obtained! Judge of my mother’s—judge of our affliction! By turns speechless or delirious, he now lies in a raging fever, unconscious of our distress, and insensible of his own danger. The physician who visited him this morning, on hearing of the party he was engaged in yesterday, attributed his illness to what he termed, *an excess of conviviality*, and gave us to understand, it was chiefly owing to his having first heated his blood by drinking more than he was accustomed to, and then by hard riding. Perhaps these two causes might contribute, in some degree, to produce the effect we so much lament; but that they
were

were the *sole* causes, it is impossible, knowing the extreme agitation he afterwards underwent, to believe. A moderate degree of attachment, a very cool head, and a more unfeeling heart would, I suspect, notwithstanding the *excesses* he is supposed to have run into, have better preserved him from the sufferings he now endures, than the temperance I every moment hear so warmly extolled; since its limits were so slightly infringed, that I, who saw and spoke to him, before I left the parlour, scarcely perceived that he was at all disordered.

“ As for my mother, I am convinced that in her heart, *she* puts no more faith in this opinion than *I* do, though she endeavours, and finds a species of consolation in attempting it, to persuade us she does. I own myself, it is much pleasanter to believe his illness arises from circumstances merely accidental, such as will give way to proper attendance, and medical skill, than to acknowledge its germ lies in his heart, and its cure in her power!

“ Lady Julia means to write to you to-morrow; in your answer, my Clarentine,

tine, forbear, I beseech you, to give her the slightest hint concerning any thing that has passed. It is thought right here to keep her in profound ignorance upon the subject; our *Supérieure* has so decreed it, and seems to think, if the projected alliance can but be brought to bear, it is of very little consequence upon what terms—with how much anguish to one party, or with what prospects to the other.—Very humane policy, it must be allowed!

“ We heard from my brother Frederick to-day. He is no longer in the same ship with Mr. Somers, which he seems to lament extremely. They parted soon after Somers was made post-captain, and Frederick, who is now stationed in the Mediterranean, knows not exactly where his friend has been ordered, but believes he is in the West Indies.

“ Adieu, dearest Clarentine. My heart is very sad, and my letter not very consolatory; but in such a house, and under such impressions it would be difficult to write with higher spirits.

“ A thousand loves to Madame d'Arzele, and compliments to the Chevalier.
When

When does he return? Send your answer by him, and beg he will seize the first opportunity of delivering it to me privately. After that, I will let you know whether you may safely write to me in the usual way, by post.

“ Once more, my Clarentine, adieu.

“ S. D.”

The three first days that succeeded the writing this letter, were marked by no material changes in Sir Edgar, and no circumstances of moment in the family. On the morning of the fourth, however, the Chevalier de Valcour, in his way from Sidmouth to Welwyn Park, stopped for a few minutes at Delmington, and found means, before he left the house, of delivering the following letter to Sophia.

Sidmouth, July 13.

MISS S. DELMINGTON.

“ The charge of secrecy with which you conclude your affectionate letter, my ever-kind Sophia, alarms me so much on your account, that I now answer it with the most fearful mistrust and apprehension.

hension. You own it not; yet, I can have no doubt you were prohibited from holding any correspondence with me.— Oh why, my dearest girl! for one who is deemed undeserving such an indulgence, why incur such a risk? Had not the apprehension of appearing to you ungrateful, or negligent, urged me, even in opposition to my own judgment, too strongly to be resisted, believe me, I never should have found courage, after such a caution, to have addressed you, by any conveyance whatever. Pray Heaven I may not be involving you in any portion of my own disgrace, by venturing upon so hazardous an experiment! It would quite break my heart, were that to be the case! Write to me no more, therefore, I beseech you.— Tempt me not again to engage you in such danger; to have forborne answering so friendly a letter as your last would have been impossible; and yet I tremble to think what you may suffer by my doing it!

“ I see, my Sophia, notwithstanding the generous anxiety with which you endeavour to cheer me with better hopes,
I see

I see plainly, I am now become an utter exile from your house ! I have lost the only tie that could ever bind me to your mother's heart, her good opinion ; and I fear, *irrecoverably* lost it ; at least, if I must depend for its restoration on my own justification ; since, at such a moment as this, while your unhappy brother lies in the dreadful state you describe to me, no selfish considerations upon earth, no prospect of personal advantage, however great, could induce me to enter the lists as his accuser. Let my vindication, therefore, rest where it is, for the present ; and suffer me at least to delay entering upon the subject, till I hear better tidings of Sir Edgar, and can do it with less pain to his mother's feelings. At this time there would be a hardened insensibility, a want of decency, in beginning such an explanation, I shudder but to think of ; nor could I do it, even to regain what I most prize in the world, Lady Delmington's esteem ! It would seem to me, almost like raking up the ashes of the dead. It would be unpardonable, it would be cruel !

x

“ Madame

“ Madame d’Arzele, whose tenderness and whose near affinity give her a sort of claim to the most unlimited confidence, has wrung from me, reluctant as I was to make such a disclosure, even to her, every circumstance of this heart-breaking affair. She saw me depressed, and wretched, beyond all power of concealment; and so deeply partook in, so soothingly compassionated my affliction, that I found a species of consolation in pouring out all my sorrows into her affectionate bosom. She has fortified and calmed me; given me courage, I think, to bear with resignation whatever sentence is to be pronounced against me; and taught me, I hope, with thankfulness for the past, to submit unrepiningly to the future.

“ I have thought much, as you will believe, of my own situation, and thought of it with the most serious anxiety. It would be madness, I fear, let my future defence have what effect it may, to expect that my residence in your family should, during the present state of affairs, be again allowed. My request therefore is, that whenever the decree of banishment, I

look forward to with such dread, is pronounced, I may be permitted to go to Mr. Lenham's, whom I have every reason to hope will, at least for a time, admit me. If Lady Delmington, however, has other views for me, she may rest assured of my humblest concurrence: but it seems far more probable; she will rejoice, amidst so many other cares, to be exempted from any additional one, and that consequently, I may rely upon her giving a ready sanction to my petition.

“ This morning, I received a kind, but melancholy letter from Lady Julia. Whilst I perused it, how did I bless heaven that I had it still in my power to read the expressions of attachment and confidence with which she honours me, with unblushing cheeks, and a consciousness of not having forfeited by ill-conduct the friendship she has hitherto professed for me. To a guilty mind, every partial sentence that fell from her pen would have been a stab; to me, my dearest Sophia, they were as balm, my wounded spirit required; and the tears I shed over the whole letter, were literally tears of luxury and enjoyment.

“ I am

“ I am rejoiced to find you have heard from Frederick. At such a period as this, how welcome to his mother’s heart must have been the tidings of his health and safety, mine bounded with pleasure, for her sake, at the news.

“ Would to heaven, I too could hear from Mr. Somers! Might he not have written to me, dear Sophia, before he embarked upon so distant an expedition? Will *he* also, do you think, cast me off—forget all his past regard, and concern himself about me no more? Alas! this is not the time he should have chosen for such a desertion! when every word of kindness is so precious, I can less bear than ever to lose the consolation his remembrance would have afforded me. Often, often have I thought of him, since I left your house. How are all his predictions verified. Oh! could he but know what an unerring prophet he has proved, with what regret, unless he has changed indeed, would he reflect upon the additional sorrow his neglect must occasion me!

“ But my dearest Sophia, I ought to apologize for these irrational murmurs.

O 2 Unhappiness,

Unhappiness, I believe, makes egotists of us all; and as the friend of the unhappy, you must learn to bear with their infirmities. I will give way to such gloomy reflections, however, no longer, but hasten to a less unpleasant subject.

“ Our sweet little Eugenie begins already, I think, to find benefit from the change of air. She has bathed twice since our arrival, and bore it extremely well. Her dear mother views her improved looks, with a degree of transport I can give you no idea of; and but for the dejection I involuntarily cast over it, ours would be the most chearful little society in the world.

“ The Chevalier has promised to give us frequent accounts of Sir Edgar. I implored he would, lest my anxiety respecting him, overpowering my own scruples, should induce me to write again to you for intelligence.

“ I venture not, in the clandestine manner I now address you, to recommend myself to your honoured mother, nor even to include my good wishes to our sisters; my prayers are all I dare offer up, either for them, or for Sir Edgar;
and

and that they may be accepted is the most fervent wish of my heart.

“ And now, my best Sophia, farewell ; probably, “ a long farewell.” Love me ; think of me sometimes, however distant ; and be assured of the tenderest, and most grateful affection, of

“ Your own,

“ CLARENTINE DELMINGTON ”

Deeply affected by the contents of a letter, in many places, so generous, in all so simple and so touching, Sophia could not resist the strong impulse she felt, the first moment Sir Edgar's amended state of health allowed her to enter upon the subject, to communicate it to her mother. She was persuaded that the passage in particular, which accounted for Clarentine's silence with regard to her own vindication, could not fail making the most sensible impression upon such a mind as Lady Delmington's ; and might conduce more towards reinstating her in her heart, than the strongest asseverations, or even the dearest proofs of innocence, unseasonably brought forward,

In this opinion she found herself fully justified by the event. Lady Delmington, overcome by the delicacy, the gentleness of spirit that breathed throughout the whole letter, wept over it with mingled sensations of tenderness and admiration; and when she came to its conclusion, warmly exclaimed—

“Amiable, and excellent girl! oh, where shall I find courage, after this, to go through the painful task I am enjoined, to announce to her the decision that has been past?”

“What decision, dearest Madam?” fearfully enquired Sophia; “Is it possible, have you really consented?”

“Ask me no questions, Sophia,” interrupted Lady Delmington, “I cannot revoke the reluctant promises I have given, nor can I bear to dwell longer upon the subject. Leave me then for the present. I shall write to your poor friend this evening, and shew you my letter before it goes. Let *that* answer all your objections.”

Sophia retired with a heavy and foreboding heart; and early the following morning was summoned to her mother’s dressing-

dressiug-room, to hear the dreaded sentence she had been taught to expect.

MISS DELMINGTON.

Delmington-House, July 6th.

“ The fight of my hand-writing will, I doubt not, equally astonish and alarm you: but divest yourself of all apprehensions, Clarentine; it is as little my purpose to shock you by useless recriminations, as to mislead you by delusive promises! I write with a determination of speaking openly and frankly to you; and of putting an end at once to a state of uncertainty, I know so well how to pity.

“ Now, therefore, let me own, my still-dear Clarentine, that the unfortunate passion of my son, however the violence with which it at last burst forth may have distressed, has not, for one moment, surprised me. I have long entertained a vague suspicion of this nature, which being strengthened by the insinuations of others, almost arose at one time to positive conviction. Then, you will say, would have been the proper season to have devised some effectual check to its
further

further progress; true: but we are not always aware of the danger of procrastination, and your extreme youth at that period; the separation that shortly after took place between you and Edgar; other cares; and above all, the difficulty of finding a more eligible abode for you, diverted me from my design, and led me to silence, as groundless, every intrusive apprehension.

“Edgar’s conduct ever after, whether dictated by acquired caution, or resulting from natural reserve, was so astonishingly guarded; his behaviour to you betrayed so little of the *lover*, I may almost add, of the *friend*, that till this extraordinary discovery laid his heart open before us, I question if a single individual of my family, Mrs. Harrington and myself alone excepted, had ever conceived the slightest idea of his attachment.

“The case is now changed; and he who, when a mother’s watchful eye fearfully observed him, had sufficient command over his passions, to conceal and restrain them, in one unguarded moment, when all distrust was over, and all vigilance at an end, turned traitor to himself,

self, and wantonly betrayed his *own*, and, ah Clarentine ! I greatly fear, *your* secret also !

“ But of this I have no right, no wish to be informed. As circumstances now stand, such a confession would only add to my concern for you, without enabling me to flatter you with the most distant hope. I might lament over you : but as I cannot serve you, leave me, at least, the consolation of a *doubt* upon this subject.

“ Favoured, and beloved as you have ever been by Lady Julia Leyburné, I cannot suppose she wholly concealed from you the treaty that was in agitation between her father and myself. I may therefore venture to speak to you of it, without disguise.

“ Independant of the noble income Lady Julia will bring my son, an income which, considering the narrow limits of his *own*, and the large deductions from it that must be made in order to pay his sisters' fortunes, becomes almost indispensable to the ease and comfort of his remaining life. She is the woman whom, amidst thousands, I would have selected,

as

as the one most likely to render him happy.

“Allowing for the natural timidity of her temper, the domestic education she has received, and the life of unvarying retirement she has led, I observe in her the seeds of every good quality that can be desired. The helpless indolence that formerly marked her disposition gives place to greater energy every day. She is sincere, generous, and benevolent; and by the placid meekness that characterises her, seems to me, of all others, the wife best suited to one, who already announces a temper so impetuous and ardent as Edgar.

“Thus far then, I am justified in wishing for this match. It ensures affluence and independence to himself; the certainty of being able to provide handsomely for his sisters; the prospect of becoming heir to Mrs. Harrington; and the fairest hopes, if reasoned gently into compliance, of his enjoying, ever after, a state of domestic peace and serenity.”

“Now, suffer me to reverse the picture: suffer me to trace a faint sketch of the evils that, in my opinion, would follow

low his union with you; nor imagine, dear Clarentine, that my purpose is to wound or insult you by the comparison. Far be such an intention from my heart. No, my love; to warn and caution you is all I have in view. My language would be the same to either of my own daughters, in the same circumstances.

“ To speak first, therefore, of the dissimilarity of your tempers; Edgar’s, irritable, though soon subdued; often capitious, violent, and unreasonable, would make the torment of your life; since clear-sighted, and penetrating as you are, his starts of irrational passion could never escape you, nor consequently, ever fail either grieving, or alarming you. Not so Lady Julia. Absent in conversation; seldom animated enough to be sensible of what is passing around her, his causeless resentment, unless directed against herself, would scarcely awaken her attention, and never reach her heart. Injustice, she has not discrimination sufficient to distinguish, nor expostulation, courage enough to hazard; by her, therefore, he would escape uncondemned; and by him, she would live undisturbed. His kindness to
3 herself

herself would be all she would require ; and indifferent to his general conduct, nothing would wound, because nothing would strike her except his neglect.

“ Would this Clarentine—ask your own heart—would this be your case ? “ Tremblingly alive all o’er,” would not you feel as sensibly for others as for yourself ? Could you, an unconcerned witness of this irascibility, endure to sit tamely by, without attempting, either by reason or supplication, to moderate and appease him ? No, you could not ; and what would be the consequence ? By seeking to restrain, you would inflame him ; and by uttering, or even *looking* disapprobation, however deserved, you would bring down upon your own head the wrath originally aimed at others. From an object passionately beloved, reproof, though only implied by a gesture, or a glance, is harder to be borne, and sinks deeper into the heart, than from any other quarter ; and Edgar, naturally enclined to jealousy, anxious for your esteem, and but too ready to take alarm at the slightest appearance of its failure, would suffer himself, and impose upon you, every torment
that

that apprehended indifference; or contempt, could inflict.

“ I have been thus explicit, my dearest girl, with regard to my doubts concerning the probable event of a marriage which, to Edgar at least, now appears so desirable, in the hope of proving to you, that *all* my objections to it are not the result of ambitious and interested considerations. Heaven preserve me from ever wishing to aggrandize or enrich my family at the expence of his or your lasting misery! He shall be allowed time for mature deliberation, before I again urge, or even converse with him upon the subject; and the only thing I ask of him, or of you is, that from this time forward to the period of his coming of age, you will forbear holding any correspondence with, and avoid every opportunity of meeting each other. Meanwhile, as it would appear to me dishonourable in the extreme to deceive Lord Welwyn in an affair of so much consequence to himself, as well as his daughter, I purpose laying frankly before him the exact state of the case; leaving it to him to decide whether he chooses still to

adhere to his engagement, and wait the moment of my son's final decision before he enters into any other, or whether he prefers, at once, breaking off the match.

“ My firm opinion is, that his partiality in Edgar's favour is so great, that nothing but absolute necessity will induce him to withdraw his word. I may be mistaken ; yet, at all events Clarentine, we must whilst this negotiation is depending—we must be separated. Lady Julia may never be my daughter : but still, alas ! such is the rigorous duty my situation and my judgment enjoin me, that I dare not give an appearance of such encouragement to Edgar's love, as he might naturally imply from your being continued under the same roof with him, after his attachment to you has been made public.

“ My heart bleeds for you, my gentle Clarentine, whilst I compel myself to perform this unwelcome part. The day perhaps may come, however, when even *you* will acknowledge I have acted right ; and when, having preserved Edgar from the commission of an act of injustice towards his sisters, and you from consequent

quent self-reproach, I may be thought to merit blessings, where now I seem only to deserve condemnation.

“ Your request of being allowed to repair to Mr. Lenham’s meets with my fullest approbation. Write to him, my love, to enquire whether he can admit you, and to settle with him the terms of your board; whatever those terms may be, I shall unhesitatingly comply with them, and beg you will transmit to me his answer the moment it arrives.

“ As I shall endeavour to the utmost of my power to conceal from my son the place of your future abode, you would essentially oblige me by deferring to communicate it to Lady Julia, till I can be assured he will make no attempt to follow you. By requesting her letters may be directed to you, under cover to any third person you may choose to appoint for that purpose, after your arrival in town, this may be easily effected, and may perhaps save me from much perplexity and distress. To Sophia, as I can so entirely depend upon her, you have my readiest consent to write as often as you wish; yet—oh! forgive these too necessary

cessary precautions—yet, even to her, lest accident should betray what I so anxiously desire to keep secret, I would recommend to you always to send your letters inclosed to Madame d'Arzele.

“ It is time now, my dearest Clarentine, I should come to the conclusion of this long, and I fear you will think unfriendly explanation. I grieve to be obliged, for one instant, to give pain to your generous heart; nor can you feel deeper regret on receiving, than I do in announcing, this sentence of temporary banishment. Let one circumstance, however, be your consolation; I acquit you, as well from my knowledge of your past rectitude, as from the testimony of Edgar himself, and the sentiments contained in your letter to Sophia, of every species of blame, and of every suspicion injurious to your character; and rejoice in being able to assure you, that you have not at this moment in the world a friend, who thinks more highly of your principles and worth, than your sincere, and ever most truly affectionate,

“ H. DELMINGTON.”

END OF VOL. I.

ERRATA TO VOL. I.

Page 8, line 20, *for into, read on to.* Page 11, l. 21, *for Frederick, r. William.* Ib. l. 23. Page 86, l. 6, *for Frederick again, r. William.* Page 104, l. 15, *for Fears, r. Tears.* Page 127, last line, *for le miene, r. la mienne.* Page 128, l. 21, *for puiſe, r. puiſſe.* Page 133, l. 14, *for ponce, r. pouce.* Ib. l. 20, *for Compte, r. Comte.* Page 135, l. 11, *for le, r. la.* Page 144, l. 15, *for vous, r. vos.* Page 146, l. 19, *for coup-d'ouil, r. coup-d'oeil.* Ib. l. 20, *for apresant, r. à preſant.* Page 153, l. 6, *for fineſs, r. fineſſe.* Page 158, l. 1, *for avifir, r. aviſée.* Page 166, motto to Book II. l. 1, *for infance. r. enfance.* Page 183, l. 3, *for endeavouring, r. endeavour.* Page 217, l. 4, *r. fund, not fund.* Page 228, l. 9, *for deſigns, r. deigns.* Page 271, l. 15, *for Ay, r. Do.*



